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Glass-Eye, THE GREAT SHOT of the WEST.

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CHAPTER I.

A RIDE FOR LIFE.

"Lost on the prairie!"

These were the terrible words that Rosa Beckwith repeated to herself, in a scared whisper as she reined up her black stallion, and took a terrified survey of the surroundings. This morning, for the twentieth time, she had ridden out from her father's wagon-train, relying upon the fleetness of her steed to carry her away from all danger, but, by some means or other, she had wandered so far away that she had become bewildered, and here she was with the afternoon half gone, and with not the slightest idea of the direction she should take to rejoin her friends.

She was facing westward, and in that direction naught but billowy prairies stretching away until they joined the far horizon met the eye. To the southward the view was nearly the same, with the exception that miles off the white cone of a mountain peak rested like a fleecy cloud against the summer sky.

On the east was a ridge of hills, covered with straggling sage and underbrush, stretching irregularly away to the northward, and scarcely a hundred yards from where her foamy, panting steed had halted.

"I cannot remember that I ever saw them before," she said to herself, "and it is strange that I can't find any clew to guide me out of this solitude. I wonder whether that is a smoke or a cloud yonder?"

A thin, misty volume in the far-off horizon was the object to which she alluded; but it really made little difference to her whether it was one form of vapor or another; for, if it came from a camp-fire, it was certain that it had not been kindled by any of her party.

But, at this moment, her stallion pricked up his ears, and turned his nose in the direction of the ridge in such a way, that the attention of the fair rider was instantly attracted.

"What do you see, Sala-

din?" she asked, as she stroked the glossy neck of the beautiful steed. "Does some wild animal threaten, or is it—"

At that moment, Rosa herself observed a movement among the stunted trees, that was plainly made by something besides the wind, and she steadied herself in the saddle, as she looked intently in the direction to see what it meant.

It appeared as if some large animal were stealing among the undergrowth, and the girl was quite certain that it was a bear, or possibly a bewildered buffalo, when to her amazement and alarm, an Indian horseman suddenly made his appearance, and striking his steed into a gallop, headed directly toward her. She saw, during those few seconds, that he was mounted upon a magnificent horse, and was himself a Sioux warrior of almost gigantic size.

As he started forward, he swung his arm over his head and called out something, which Rosa

did not understand, and the meaning of which she did not stop to inquire. She had no weapon of any kind in her possession, and she gave the rein to Saladin, who pointed his nose to the southward, and sped away in the direction of the cloud-like peak, as if it were a light-house, beckoning him into some safe harbor.

But the trouble with this noble stallion was that he had been on the gallop almost unremittingly since early morning, and the spume-flake from his distended nostrils, and the latherly foam that covered his glistening sides, proved how nearly he was used up. He was capable of very little more in the way of work, but, as conscious of the terrible duty required of him, he shot away like an arrow, and with a spirit that seemed able to carry him many a league toward the tropical south.

Rosa looked back, and in her terror was certain that her demon-like pursuer would overtake her, for besides the splendid manner in

which he was mounted, it was plain that he was quite fresh, and in this respect held a vast advantage over the fugitive. At any rate the Sioux meant to do that same thing, if it were within the range of the possibilities, and he bent himself to the task in dead earnest: and, as if the hope of paralyzing the gallant little animal that was straining every nerve to carry his beautiful mistress beyond danger, the red-skin at intervals gave out a shout, loud and horrible enough to wake the dead.

But the outcry seemed if possible rather to add wings to the flying heels of the stallion, and, as Rosa witnessed his noble efforts, a thrill of hope came to her at the belief that possibly she would escape after all. The play of Saladin's muscles was like that of some splendid machinery in its tireless movements.

"Heaven protect us, my truest friend," she exclaimed, as she patted his far-reaching neck. "You deserve a better lot than to kill yourself in trying to save me."

Just then the Sioux let out his whooping screech again, and the terrified girl, certain that it sounded nearer than the other, turned her head.

A moan of despair came from her lips, as she saw that such indeed was the fact. Less than a hundred yards separated the two, and the Indian was steadily gaining. What earthly refuge had she?

In her extremity of terror, she glanced right and left, and indeed in all direc-



GLASS-EYE TO THE RESCUE.

tions with a woful, prayerful look, but not a sign of help was to be seen. Already the ridge, from which the painted red-skin had issued, was a mile or more behind them, and the white mountain-peak against the blue horizon seemed as far off as ever.

"Why keep up the struggle, Saladin?" she wailed, as she drew the rein. "You may as well save your own life, when the losing of it will not save mine."

But if the rider had given up in despair, the steed had not, and for the first time he refused to obey his mistress. When she increased her pressure upon the rein, he took the bit between his teeth, and flirted his head, as if to say to her that the time had come for him to assume charge of himself.

"Go on then, as I cannot check you," she said, after she had repeated the effort several times.

"We are both doomed, beyond all possibility of escape."

"Whoop!" again that terrible outcry sounded above the thunder of the horse's hoofs; and, as the shivering fugitive once more turned her head, she saw that less than fifty feet separated them. The yell of the Sioux was now more of exultation than any thing else, for the game was in hand, and Rosa saw in that one terrified glance, that he held the coil of a lasso in his left hand, while the loop was gathered in his right, and he was on the very eve of throwing it. He had dropped his horse's reins upon his neck, for the sagacious animal understood as well what was required of him as if he were struggling to place his master alongside the wounded buffalo.

The despairing girl knew the meaning of that circling serpent in the hands of the red-skin. She was well aware that, like the rattlesnake, it was drawing itself together for the purpose of making its fatal blow, and a shudder ran through her beautiful form, as she placed her hand against her white throat, as if to keep the reptile from strangling her to death.

At that instant there came a hissing whiz, something flitted like a shadow before her eyes, and she knew that the warrior had thrown the lasso.

Thrown it, he had, with the unerring dexterity of the Mexican ranchero, and the elliptical coil had inclosed her shoulders and waist, with as much ease and grace, as if dropped there by herself. It was not tightened when around her throat, for the Indian probably meant to use no violence toward her at this time, but it settled down over her waist and still lay loose and undrawn, while her horse continued ploughing forward.

Rosa braced herself in the saddle and attempted once more to check Saladin, for she was fearful of being pulled from his back and dashed to pieces upon the ground; but the stallion shook his head viciously, and seemed really to increase, rather than diminish his speed.

The thunder of the horse's hoofs sounded closer than ever, and once more the Indian yelled—giving out a sharp, sudden cry, different from any thing that had yet been heard. The girl turned her head, while the unearthly screech was still ringing in her ears, and saw the Sioux throw up his own arms, and his head and shoulders dropped backward upon his steed. Then his head swayed for a moment from side to side, like that of a drunken man, and suddenly he toppled over and rolled to the ground, his momentum causing him to roll over and over several times.

Finally he lay motionless and perfectly dead?

CHAPTER II.

GLASS-EYE, THE GREAT SHOT.

FORTUNATELY indeed for the lassoed lady, the Sioux warrior, at the time of whirling the coil, held the other end loosely in his hand, instead of having it ringed to his saddle, as would have been the case had he been pursuing wild horse or mustang; and so, when he toppled headlong from his steed, the loose bull-hide dangled over the ground, like some serpent, fastened by its own fangs in the body of its fleeing victim.

Several minutes passed before Rosa comprehended what had taken place. Seeing the loop still loosely around her body, she grasped it in one hand and flung it over her head. Then, failing to hear the clamp of the horse's hoofs, she looked behind her.

There he stood, several hundred yards distant, perfectly motionless, with his head bent down, and apparently snuffing around the dead body of his master, as if there was some mystery about the whole thing which passed his knowledge.

At this juncture, Saladin found the danger was over for the present, and he rapidly check-

ed the tremendous speed at which he had been going, and coming down to a walk, his rider was speedily able to bring him to a stand-still, when she sprung from the saddle.

"There! my champion, there is an end even to your endurance, and you have reached it. Rest while you can, for who shall say how soon you will need your strength again?"

The black stallion seemed ready to drop from utter exhaustion, and began weakly munching the grass, which grew exuberantly around, while his rider, leaving him to recuperate as best he could, looked around upon the wide-spreading prairie to see whether there was yet any sign of hope for her.

She could dimly make out the figure of the Indian, stretched out upon the greensward, with his charger still nosing about him—but not another living creature was in sight. The ridge from which the Sioux had issued lay fully two miles to the northward, while in every other direction, the rolling prairie united with the horizon in the far distance.

"What killed him?" was the awed question the beautiful Rosa asked herself, as she looked upon the prostrate form.

Worlds would not have tempted her to venture near enough to the form to learn by what means the Sioux had met his death, and yet in spite of the peril in which she stood, she felt a natural curiosity to understand the cause of her seemingly miraculous delivery from impending death.

"Further away from home than ever," she repeated to herself, as, shading her eyes from the rays of the declining sun, she gazed off toward the white mountain-peak, as if expecting to find something there that beckoned her to the refuge she was seeking.

"This is a punishment for my own foolishness," she added. "The pitcher may go to the well once too often, and the prophecy that father made last week has come true at last. He said that if I did not stop wandering away, I would be cut off by the Indians, or would lose myself entirely—and here I am, with scarcely a possibility of my getting shelter to-night."

She continued communing with herself in this way for some time, still looking absently to the southward, with a feeling that it was from that direction help was finally to come, when she was recalled to her situation by the whim of her horse, which had stopped cropping the grass, and was looking off toward the ridge.

A profounder surprise awaited her, when she saw a second horseman galloping toward her, and already within a short distance. With a gasp of terror, Rosa started to flee to her horse, when she paused, for the reason that she knew an attempt at flight was useless, and she saw that the approaching stranger was a white man.

And yet, for all that, he might be as dangerous as the most ferocious Sioux or Crow, and she stood beside her jaded stallion surveying the stranger with an apprehension peculiarly painful to one in her position.

He was heading toward her on an easy, swinging gallop, and was still some distance away, when she was surprised and somewhat relieved by the appearance of the stranger. He was attired in the rough, savage dress of the border, with a small skull-cap, and a belt around the waist, which fairly bristled with pistols and bowie-knives. His face was covered with a neatly trimmed beard, black as jet, while the cap was drawn down so low that his handsome dark eyes had barely room to look out upon the world. He sat his horse like a centaur, and his form was a marvel of symmetry and grace. A long rifle lay across the saddle in front, and had he worn a slouched hat, he would have suggested one of those brigands that loiter around the plains of Marathon, to rob and murder the wayfarers passing that way.

Rosa was at the mercy of this man, whoever he might be, and she concluded to act as if she believed he could be nothing else but the very friend whom she longed to see.

As she stood, with one hand resting on the neck of her beautiful steed, her attitude, taken without a thought, was the very one calculated to bring out in bold relief her remarkable grace and symmetry of figure. Her weight was supported mainly upon one foot, while the tiny shoe of the other peeped like a jewel from beneath her dark dress, and the brilliant shawl, or rather cape, which she always wore when riding over the prairie, was secured at the throat by a dazzling jewel, and the folds sweeping back over her shoulders, left revealed the Grecian-like form of the upper portion of the body. Her tasteful hat was surmounted by a crimson feather, that had come all the way across the Atlantic, and her purplish-black hair

rippled away over her shoulders, far below the waist. The cheeks had a deeper glow, as her lustrous eyes were fixed inquiringly on the approaching stranger, and the rosy lips were parted just enough to give a glimpse of the pearly teeth.

The horseman reined up his steed, when a few feet distant, and without removing his hat, made a military salute, and called out, in a voice that sounded rather coarser than she expected to hear:

"Good evenin', gal! This yer's hardly the place a chap would expect to find such a high creetur' as I take you to be, from your dress and git-up."

"And it is hardly the place I expected to be in myself," she replied. "It is through no will of my own that I am here, lost on the prairie."

"Lost on the prairie, you say, eh? But, whar did you cum from? You didn't grow in these parts—that I'll subscribe to. Whar did you come from?"

"I belong to a wagon-train that started a couple of weeks ago from St. Louis, and we are on the way to Upper California, where a number of friends have preceded us and made preparations for founding a colony. I had formed a dangerous habit of riding ahead of the train, and to-day I lost my way, and have not the slightest idea of the direction I should take to rejoin them. Have you seen any thing of my friends?"

The horseman shook his head.

"Nary hide nor ha'r. I've been off on considerle of a tramp sin' sun-up, and I reckon that you must have slid a powerful heap of miles to get into this neighborhood, whar the Sioux ar' as plenty as musketers in August. The wonder is that that ar' party top-knot of yours hasn't been hung to the ridge-pole of some of the varmints afore this. You've been mighty lucky, young gal."

"I have had one narrow escape, already," replied Rosa, pointing to the other horse and the inanimate form. "He had already thrown his lasso over my shoulders, when he threw up his arms and fell dead from his horse."

"What sent him under?" asked the stranger, looking at the object indicated.

"I can not tell; it is a mystery to me. He acted just as if he were shot."

"Come, go over with me, and I'll find out."

Rosa's repugnance caused her to hesitate, seeing which, the horseman added:

"If you ain't used to such sights, I reckon you'll hev to be afore you see Californy. So, come along, gal, and see what we kin see."

Through fear of offending this strange character, whom she was so anxious to conciliate, the girl walked along, he turning the head of his horse in that direction, and riding slightly in advance. Like all of his kind, this rough borderer was quite loquacious, and he rattled away as they moved slowly over the prairie.

"Don't s'pose you've heard tell of me. Them as know me call me Glass-Eye, which ain't because I wear one of them ornamental orgings, but some folks say I kin see further than an eagle, and I don't dispute 'em. I b'long to the peraries and mountains, and hate the settlements worse nor pison, 'cause nobody lives thar but scamps and skunks—that is since you've come West. My ranch lays over yonder, behind tother end of the ridge, and I reckon you'll hev to find quarters thar for the night, 'cause it's a leetle too late, and your animile is a leetle too far gone to hunt up the wagon-train; but here's our man, and we'll make a daggnoasis of his case, as the doctors say."

CHAPTER III.

THE FRIEND IN NEED.

As Glass-Eye uttered the words just given, he leaped out of his saddle, and advanced to where the Sioux lay upon the greensward, while Rosa halted a short distance away, and looked in another direction, unwilling to look upon the ghastly scene.

But the hunter seemed not to understand that any one could have any such compunction, and he had scarcely reached the body and looked at it, when he called out:

"Come here, gal, I'll show you suthing."

Forcing down her repugnance, she advanced resolutely forward, never halting until she stood directly beside her strange friend.

"See thar," he added, pointing to a round, dark orifice, in the shaven skull of the Indian directly above the eye. "Thar's whar somebody's powder-pill went in and sent that warrior to his happy hunting-grounds, and you tell me that nobody didn't fire it."

"Who could have done it?" asked Rosa, seizing the excuse for looking away. "The ridge

yonder is the only place that could conceal a person, and that is all of a mile distant. It was but such a short time ago, that we could see any such marksman, for he has not had time enough to get out of sight. Can you detect any one?"

Glass-Eye stood erect and looked carefully around in every direction before replying. It would seem that a crouching bird in the grass could not escape the sweep of that eagle-like vision; but the result of the survey was as might have been anticipated.

"Your observation, gal, is correct," he remarked. "Thar ain't a livin' soul, within a mile and a half of us—for the ridge yonder is all of that—and thar hain't been any one nearer than that, when this Sioux passed in his checks and waltzed under."

"Perhaps he shot himself," suggested Rosa, her curiosity scarcely less than that of her companion.

Glass-Eye's large frame shook with silent laughter at the idea.

"Thar ain't many fashions of the whites that the varmints hain't introduced among 'em, but suicide is suthing that they don't hanker arter; they don't seem to yearn fur it, but, howsumever, it's easy to find out."

With which, he stooped over and drew a revolver from the belt of the fallen Indian. A minute's examination showed that each of the four chambers held its charge. The rifle still resting upon the saddle of the horse was also loaded, so that last explanation was taken away from the two who were in pursuit of knowledge.

"Ah! I understand it," added Glass-Eye with his chuckle, "this painted skunk, arter he killed himself, held on long enough to load up ag'in, just on purpose to bother us. That's the style of them critters—they hain't the first touch of honor."

Speculation was useless as to the cause of what was certainly a most singular occurrence, and Rosa turned her head away as if resolved to shut the revolting sight from eye as well as mind. Standing thus a moment, the continued silence caused her to look back again at her companion, and she was startled to see him gazing fixedly at her, with such a strange, piercing glance that a thrill of alarm passed through her frame.

He removed his eyes, the instant he saw her turn, and then asked in a lower voice.

"I've giv you my name, gal, now what's yours?"

"Rosa Beckwith—and my father's name is Oscar Beckwith. We have lived in Missouri until a few months ago. Why do you start thus?"

His sudden start and evident embarrassment had startled her, and looking intently, as he withdrew his gaze abruptly, she detected something in his look and manner, that recalled the past, that suggested to her that she had encountered them before, although where and when she could not conjecture.

But this summer day was drawing to a close, and it was wasted time to stand here indulging in badinage and speculation. The hunter seemed to awaken to this fact, and changing his manner to a more prompt, business-like form, he said:

"Wal, gal, it's time we dusted out of this yer latitudo. I'm allers opposed to the waste of any raw material, so I'll take these shootin'-irons of the red-skin with me, and your hoss-flesh is so well tuckered out, that I advise you to drop him and take this other animile, that seems pow'ful docile just now."

"Oh, I couldn't think of leaving my good Saladin," Rosa hastened to say. "We have become too much attached to let anything except death part us. I would not give Saladin for all the horses in the world."

"That ar' is nat'ral, I s'pose," assented Glass-Eye, "cause I feel rather tender toward Blunderbus here and wouldn't sell him under no circumstances, whatsoever—unless some one should offer me a fair price for him. It would be too bad to leave this other animile here, with no one to look arter him, 'cause when he grows old, he needs some one to rub him down and put him to bed. So I'll take him along with me, and you kin mount your Slapdash ag'in, and we'll take it slow back to the ranch. Just wait a minute, and I'll give you a boost."

But Rosa had vaulted into the saddle, and Saladin seemingly much refreshed by his rest, showed his pluck and spirit, and was ready to bound away like an antelope.

Glass-Eye having possessed himself of the effects of the defunct Sioux, turned his own horse's head to the north-east, the captured animal following with the docility of a dog. Rosa was somewhat in the rear, seeing which the

hunter held his steed back until they were side by side.

She did not feel exactly safe in his company, and more than once a thrill of fear passed through her, as she caught him gazing at her in that furtive, intense way to which we have referred, and, at such times, there came also that flush of suspicion that he was not an entire stranger to her, but rack her brain as much as she chose, and she could not explain the meaning of such a strange suspicion.

She concluded finally that the resemblance to some person she had met was accidental, and hoped that the man under whose protection she had placed herself, although rough of speech was still a true knight, who would defend her against danger of all kinds, and into whose power she might place herself without alarm. This, we say, was her hope, but she was far from feeling assured upon the point, there remaining just enough uncertainty to make her uneasiness of mind absolutely distressing at times.

Glass-Eye seemed to be in quite exuberant spirits, and rattled away at a rate that would have been very interesting at another time.

"My ranch lays just over yester," he said, pointing with his finger in the direction of the ridge. "It ain't the place one of your Wall street operators would pick out as a country residence, though there be plenty of b'ars and bulls, that can make 'em dance 'round rather lively, if they got 'em whar they had a chance at 'em."

"Are you all alone in your dwelling?"

"Generally—but the latch-string is out to them of my own color, and now and then I have a visitor or two—but it ain't often, and you'll be the fust white gal that ever stepped into the ranch."

"I should suppose so," returned Rosa; "although such a fine-looking horseman as you are would have no difficulty in persuading some bird to come to your nest."

"Thar! thar! no more of that!" interrupted Glass-Eye, in great agitation. "Thar ar' some things that I'm tender on, and that ar' one of 'em. So shut down on sich palaver as that."

Rosa craved pardon for having offended him in this fashion, and, as he seemed about to relapse into a gloomy reverie, she skillfully drew him out by a number of questions about his ranch and his manner of living in such a solitude as this. The hunter became quite animated again, and she learned that he had lived in this section for some two or three years, but that he had not built the house. He had purchased it of a company of men who had been led into the neighborhood by some wild report of diamonds and gold, and after prospecting thoroughly, had sold the place to him and had left in disgust.

It seemed just to suit Glass-Eye's purpose, and he was very free to say he expected to stay there until he died of old age, or until what was more probable, he should "drift under" sunk by the bullet of some bloody Indian, all of whom were ever on the watch for such work.

CHAPTER IV.

GLASS-EYE'S SECRET.

A SHORT distance further at this leisurely gait and the two began ascending the ridge whose utmost elevation was no more than a hundred feet. A few spare cottonwoods helped to add to the loveliness of the scene, while the dim twilight that was deepening in every direction and shrouding the prairie in the gloom of an early summer evening assisted to make the hour one of a most dismal character. At the very base of the ridge, something caught the eye of the hunter and caused him to check his horse and utter the exclamation:

"What in thunder does that mean?"

At first, Rosa was unable to discover what it was that had aroused the ire of her companion; but the next instant, Glass-Eye had leaped from the saddle and stooped before one of the trees and bending his head forward began peering at a small printed handbill or poster that was pinned against the bark of the trunk. In the dim semi-darkness he was able, with some difficulty, to trace the following curious "proclamation":

"IN THE MIDST OF LIFE WE ARE IN DEATH!"

"There is no knowing when the shaft of death will strike us down. Riches take to themselves wings and fly away. The Rich Man of to-day is the Beggar of to-morrow. The most poignant anguish of a man, when called upon to shuffle off his mortal coil is the thought that he is about to leave the dear ones behind him, without the means of keeping the wolf from the door. Therefore, get your life insured in the Star-Spangled Banner Insurance Company. Liberal terms given. All policies non-forfeitable."

"JEFFERSON JONES, Agent."

Glass-Eye read this poster through from beginning to end, speaking each word in a tone

loud enough for the girl to hear. When he had finished, he stood for a minute, perfectly dumbfounded. How, in the name of all that was wonderful did that specimen of civilization come to be posted up there, in that spot in the wilderness? It was so close to his ranch, that he knew it was not there that morning. It was placed in such a conspicuous place, that he could not have failed to see it, and he pronounced it as great a mystery as the shooting of the Sioux, when galloping at full speed over the prairie.

"I'll be skulped, if things ain't gettin' pokerish in these parts," he exclaimed, in an undertone, turning about and addressing Rosa. "I've been through some qu'ar adventur's in my time, but this beats 'em all. It's 'nough to find you waltzing over the perary, but when you come to add to that, the way that varmint sailed under, and then this piece of printed I mer—wal matters is gettin' a leetle too hefty fu e. The next thing I s'pose will be a Sunday-school picnic in the heart of the Sioux country; but, come, the ranch is clus by, and I'm keepin' you out-doors too long."

Once more he started his horse up the slope, and this time nothing interrupted them, until they reached the very top, when he once more leaped to the ground, walking back to where the bewildered girl still sat upon her animal.

"Are we to halt here?" she asked, looking around. "I see no house or ranch."

"Cause the darkness is a leetle too plenty; but, let me help you down."

She gave him her hand as he spoke, and, as he helped bear her light weight to the ground, she felt him tremble with emotion, and the old misgiving came back to her, and made her think that escaping the Indian, she had fallen into as great danger.

"I don't s'pose your animal will run away," he remarked inquiringly.

"No—he will not leave me; we love each other too much for one to play deserter."

"That's the way with my critter—but I don't know 'bout this piece I've captured, so I'll take him down the other side, and make him fast with a lariat so he can't slip away in the night—so just stay whar you be, gal, fur a minute."

Rosa saw him walk away in the gloom, leading the Indian's horse with him. Once or twice, while she was waiting, she fancied she heard a slight movement among the trees behind her, and Saladin showed some uneasiness; but she saw nothing, and before she had time to conjure up any dreadful fears, Glass-Eye came up the slope alone.

A "ranch" is generally supposed to be a sort of cattle or stock farm such as are found in Texas and the South-west, and consequently the name was a misnomer when applied to the residence of the protector of Rosa Beckwith, as he had not a single animal upon it besides the three horses, and did not support so much even as a dog.

The house was a curious compound of logs, trees and stones, built by the disgusted diamond-seekers, and proved that they had among their number, several who were quite skillful at manual labor. The building was over twenty feet square, and the lower story was divided into two rooms; above this were three apartments, and finally a third one quite narrow and intended principally as a look-out, surmounted them all.

The entire house was banked in by stones and brush in such a way that a person might pass within a hundred feet without suspecting a human being dwelt there. The ground floor was literally named, as there was naught else upon which to rest the feet—but above was genuine planking. The walls of the first story were composed of massive boulders, the door being an ingeniously arranged "swinging rock," while a critical examination of the entire structure would have shown an astonishing amount of strength, and such a capacity for resistance, that it could very well be used as a fort against any number of Indians.

All was such utter darkness, that Rosa was forced to stand where she was until a light was brought, which speedily appeared in the shape of a genuine lantern in the hand of Glass-Eye, and then she stepped forward, not without a certain misgiving into this curious habitation.

She indulged in many natural expressions of delight and wonder, as she gazed about her, while her friend gave the history of the place, and how it was that she came to see so many "civilized" articles about her. When all this had been explained, he gave her a lunch of cold buffalo-steak, but she ate sparingly for her agitation of mind was so great that little appetite remained to her.

"You are wearied and need rest," said Glass-

Eye in a tenderer tone than he had used heretofore, "and I will show you to your sleeping chamber."

As she signified that such was her wish, he took the lantern in hand, and walking to one corner, ascended a ladder, and led the way over the planked floor to one of the smaller apartments, which was secured by a massive door. Here he set down the lantern and motioned her to enter.

"Rest in peace," he said, with the courtesy of a chevalier; "no one can enter my ranch, without first passing over my dead body. I shall guard you as faithfully as if you were my sister."

There was a strange look in his eyes, as he uttered these words, and saluting her with that half-military movement, which seemed to come natural to him, he bade her good-night and walked away.

Makin' his way to the lower story, he did not light another lantern, but took his seat in the gloom and darkness, where he gave way in utter dejection to the most depressing reverie.

"Am I like Salathiel, that I am doomed to walk over the earth, seeking rest and finding none?" he said, his bitter voice sounding like that of another person, while that rude mode of speech was gone altogether. "Cast off by Rosa Beckwith, the girl whom I loved more than my own life, I have come West and put on the garb and manner of a half-savage hunter, hoping in the excitement and danger of such a career to drown the memory of my great heart-sorrow. And so, when the other diamond-seekers left, I staid here, and when I have begun to forget, fate sends the girl herself here—here, hundreds of miles across the prairie, right in this perilous country, and it is doomed for me to rescue her. Ay, at this moment, she is sleeping above my head. How the thought makes my heart throb! I knew her the minute I saw her, though I was not absolutely certain until she told me her name. She does not suspect me, but it was hard to keep my secret. I led her off toward the dead Sioux, so as to give me time to collect my thoughts. My heavy beard, my change of speech and voice have kept her from suspecting me. I would not have her learn who I am for worlds. She is more beautiful—more lovely than ever—but hark! there is some one outside!"

CHAPTER V.

THE INSURANCE AGENT.

As Glass-Eye heard the slight disturbing noise outside, he did not move nor speak, but sat still and listened. He plainly detected the sound of some one moving about, and a moment's further listening satisfied him that whoever it might be, he was not an Indian. There was too much awkwardness in his motions, which would have aroused a war-party of Sioux long ago.

Convinced at last that he was searching for the entrance to the house, the hunter indulged in a rather vociferous sneeze for the purpose of directing him aright.

"Helloa!" exclaimed the stranger, in a surprised undertone, as he paused to listen; "that sounds like the blast from my own bugle. Surely some one finds shelter in these parts, and if my vision does not deceive my eyesight, I observed a lady under his escort. It's blamed queer that I can't find the door. I'm used to that sort of business, but I think this man must have taken his in to-night."

Convinced by this time that there was nothing to fear from this character, Glass-Eye stealthily arose, lit a lamp, and hung it overhead, where its light filled the whole interior. This answered the purpose, and a minute later, a tall, angular figure stooped at the open passage-way and peering in, called out:

"Good-evening, pardner."

And without waiting for a reply, or an invitation, he walked into the "ranch," took a seat, and handed a card to the owner.

He was fully six feet in height, very thin, dressed in a swallow-tail coat, which was of the same color and material as vest and trowsers. The wool hat was also of the same snuff tint, and indeed there seemed scarcely to be any other color about him—his gaiters partaking of the same hue, while his beard and countenance had a decided leaning in that direction. He sported a long, straggling mustache, and a thin, attenuated goatee, while there was a sharp, speculative look in his eyes, as he sat down upon one of the rude chairs, removed his hat and waited for his host to read his card, which contained the handsomely-printed words:

"Jefferson Jones. Agent Star-Spangled Banner Insurance Company. Insurance effected upon the most liberal terms."

"What in the name of thunder brings you into these parts?"

Mr. Jones threw one leg over the other, elevated his eyebrows, leaned back and "opened."

"Merely a stroke of enterprise, sir—enterprise entirely. I represent the greatest insurance company ever organized on this terrestrial footstool, sir—branch offices in every city in the Union. The people are rushing to us in such multitudes to get insured that I was being overwhelmed, and was forced to dust. Occurring to me that the prairies and mountains offered a new field of enterprise, I determined to be the pioneer. I come out with a surveying-party that are hunting up a route for a road across the plains, and I insured every one of them, before we were ten miles out of Omaha. Upon the reservation we were lucky enough to meet a whole company of Sioux chiefs, and I have sent on the application for every one of them."

"Do you remember any of their names?" asked Glass-Eye, feeling some interest in his visitor.

"Quite a number. There were Big Foot, Hard Heart, Lone Wolf, Thunder Hawk, Dirty Face, Lame Bull, Wide Mouth, Long Legs—and a great many other romantic names I have in my note book."

"But how is it you are so far south as this?"

"Enterprise, sir; enterprise, I repeat; I take to myself considerable honor that I was the first to think of the extra risk you men run, who're exposed to pi'sened arrers and all that sort of thing. Men that are in danger of losing their lives more than others are the ones who are most in need of getting them insured. Of course, the risk is the greater for us, but then our philanthropy prevents us seeing that. And now, sir, I want your application. I have enough knowledge of medicine to act as examiner. Stand up, and let me sound your lungs."

"Hands off," growled Glass-Eye. "I don't want none o' yer foolin' round me!"

And the ready-tongued agent, in deference to the words and manner of his host, stepped back a pace or two, but he did not relinquish the fight, for no insurance agent ever did.

"When a man talks that way I'm always sure to get him," observed Mr. Jefferson Jones, with a winning smile. "You may as well come down at once, for there is no getting away from me, when I go for a man."

Glass-Eyes cowed, for he was not in the mood to-night to enjoy the peculiar ways of the persevering agent.

"Why should I get my life insured?" he asked, in his gruffest manner.

"So that, when you peg out, you will not leave any of your friends unprovided for."

"I haven't any friends to leave behind me."

"No wife, or aged father or mother?"

"None at all."

"No brothers or sisters—no close relations?"

"Not one in the world."

Jefferson Jones scratched his head. He was hardly prepared for this. But it was morally impossible to catch him on the hip. Again he broke out in that winsome smile.

"Show yourself a patriot or philanthropist then, and leave it to your country or some charitable institution."

"Country be hanged," growled the hunter. "I want you to understand, Mr. Jones, that you're welcome to my ranch, and kin go and come when you choose, but I don't want yer to try any more of yer nonsense with me, for I won't stand it. I hain't no time for any such tomfoolery."

"Suppose I make your place the head-quarters of our department of the Far West," said Jones, with a sparkle of his speculative eye. "I will pay you a reasonable rent—"

"No, you won't, I ain't in that sort of business. Come and go when you've a mind, but let me alone. I kin tell you, howsumever, that you're a little the biggest fool that I ever seen to come in these parts with the idea of starting in that business. All the insurance companies in the United States can't save your scalp, and I don't understand how you hev yer ha'r on yer head this minute. It's all I kin do to keep mine, and I'm sure I know the peraries better nor you; but do yer know what I think?" asked Glass-Eye, looking sharply at him.

"I shall be happy to hear your thoughts."

"You've come out fur your health; you've been speculatin' in bonds. You've shoved your company's securities onto Wall street and lost 'em all, and then stole half a million and hev started fur Europe, by the overland route, and when the little affair blows over, will come back ag'in and settle down on Fifth avenue, while the widders and orphans that you've cheated can starve to death."

"Give me your hand," exclaimed the delighted agent, leaping to his feet, and extending his digits. "You talk as if you've been there. You ain't such a fool as I took you to be. I don't know what I might have done, if the folks had given me the chance, but I don't git a grab at a pile big enough to tempt me. But you told me, a few minutes ago, that you had no particular friends. I observed you had a lady guest. Why not insure and leave it to her; or, if that wouldn't be exactly the thing, make your policy in my favor."

"See yer," said Glass-Eye, straightening up and placing his hand upon his revolver in a threatening manner, "I've warned yer once, and it ain't my style to do it ag'in; but I do it now the second time, and it's the last."

"I guess we'll drop the subject of life-insurance for the present," assented Mr. Jones. "Who is that young lady, that I presume has retired to rest?"

"None of yer business."

"I guess we'll drop that subject too, just now; but I wish to remark that the Star Spangled Banner Company insures ladies and gentlemen. However, I can present that matter to her on the morrow. I have left my horse grazing out there and will retire to rest."

"Thar's your bed," said the hunter, pointing to a blanket in the corner. "Sometimes I git wolfish in my sleep, and dream I'm fightin' Injins. When I do, I generally fire off my revolvers promiscuous like, and cut and slash every thing around. Howsumever, I feel a little peaceable to-night, and p'raps I'll let you alone."

"My gracious!" exclaimed Jefferson Jones, as he prepared to retire, "I wish I had another policy of insurance on my life."

CHAPTER VI.

SHADOWS AND REALITIES.

WHEN Rosa Beckwith found herself alone in the sleeping-apartment to which Glass-Eye had conducted her, she sat down, in a sort of mazy wonder, and looked about her like a mariner who concludes that it is time to take his bearings.

She was contrasting, with a half-smile, her present situation with that of a short date previous. A month ago she was in her own luxurious home in the East; a day before she spent the night in one of the sleeping-wagons belonging to the train, and to-night she was under the protection of the strange hunter, who called himself Glass-Eye, and seemed pleased to speak of his home as a ranch.

"Heaven saved my life in a wonderful manner," she said, musingly. "The Indian could not have been stricken more suddenly by a bolt from the sky, and this man seems to think of naught but befriending me. I had no hope of finding such a home in a place like this."

Looking around, she saw that the room was nearly a dozen feet each way. The bed consisted of a hammock, swung from the beams overhead, and there were two rude semblances of chairs in the room, in one of which she seated herself, while she placed the lantern in the other. Signs on every hand indicated that the builders of this structure had brought a great many articles from a long distance, and but for the danger to which such a situation was exposed, a residence for a short time would have been any thing but unpleasant.

The outside walls, as we have already stated, were made of massive boulders, fitted into each other, with the skill of genuine masonry, and an oblong opening at one end served the purpose of a window, without any sash or panes.

After Rosa had examined the room for several minutes, it occurred to her that her lamp might attract dangerous attention from the outside, and after making herself familiar with the location of every thing in the room, she quietly extinguished the light, in the hope of avoiding any such peril.

Then making sure that the massive bar of the door was in place, she made her way to the window, where she sat down and looked out.

The scene was peculiarly impressive. The new moon was in the sky, and the light from the crescent was just sufficient to give that dim, uncertain view of her surroundings, which gives play to the imagination, and causes one to believe he detects danger in every rustling bush and falling leaf. She had been in this position but a few minutes, when she saw a horseman dismount a short distance away, and approach the ranch. This was the enterprising insurance agent, and from her place she distinctly heard, in the still night air, every word that passed between them.

When, at last, the voice of Jones became quiet, and he lay down to rest, she withdrew her attention from him and looked out over the ridge and prairie. The sky had cleared in a certain sense, and as the moon ascended, she found her view considerably extended. The slope of the ridge, upon which the house stood, seemed not only to have the scattered trees of which we have spoken, but abounded with a nourishing kind of grass, that she had not noticed upon the opposite side, and it was the use of this, by a larger number of animals than were now there, that had probably suggested the idea of making a genuine ranch of the place.

The sound of the night wind, as it occasionally stole through the branches of these trees, made the most mournful kind of music, and Rosa fancied that beneath every one she could detect a shadowy form lurking, and more than once her heart quailed at the fear that the Sioux would steal up in the night and overwhelm them all.

"He is a strange being," she repeated, alluding to the hunter before, who seemed to have sunk to sleep, "and he is a puzzle to me. There is something about him that suggests other days and other scenes, far sadder than this—but what it is I cannot make out. Whether it is in his voice, or some trick of manner, I cannot tell. It must be one of those accidental resemblances which we so often meet with among new faces."

"But to-morrow we start to rejoin the train," she added, with a rebound of spirits, "and I feel very hopeful that we shall reach it, for Saladin will be given a good night's rest, and there is no steed of the prairies that can overtake him. Glass-Eye knows the country so well that he can lead me by the shortest route, and the setting of to-morrow's sun I hope to see father, my dear and only parent, again."

There was something in her strange situation which caused her to sit by the window a much longer time than she would have done at ordinary times, and that kept her awake after those below her were sound asleep. She could detect the sound of rippling water near at hand, and she remembered hearing Glass-Eye say that it was one of the sweetest and purest springs in the West.

It was now near midnight, and Rosa became conscious of a certain drowsiness stealing over her, and she was on the point of seeking rest in the hammock, when she became certain that some stranger was upon the outside. She distinctly saw a movement near one of the trees, about twenty feet distant down the slope, and she had watched but a few minutes when she made out the dim figure of a man beyond all mistake.

"Tis an Indian, too," she repeated to herself, as she saw him still more plainly, "and he may be the forerunner of a large party—some scout, sent out to find whether the way is clear or not. I am afraid Glass-Eye does not know the danger that threatens."

In a few more minutes the Indian advanced still nearer, and paused so close to the stone wall that he could be seen almost as distinctly as by daylight.

She saw that he was of large size, and as he had the hunting-shirt, leggings and "top-knot" similar to the one worn by him who had lassoed her on the day previous, she concluded that he belonged to the same tribe.

His manner showed that he was engaged upon a reconnaissance, and, like all of his people, he moved about as noiselessly as a shadow. Whether he concluded that everything was favorable or not, she had no means of judging; but shortly after he stole away as noiselessly as he had come.

He had scarcely disappeared from view, when Rosa's heart gave a great bound, as she heard some one moving softly over the planking on the outside.

"It is Glass-Eye," she whispered, in terror, as she expected next moment to hear him try her door; but he passed by, and the sounds the next moment indicated that he was making his way to the look-out above.

"He has not been asleep, after all," she repeated, vastly relieved. "He has seen the Indian, and has taken a position that gives him a much more extended view. I wonder," she added, as a new thought occurred to her, "whether he does not possess some extraordinary power of vision that gives him his name. That must mean something or he would not bear it. It may be that he is some sort of owl or Tycho Brahe that has the ability to see much further than ordinary human beings."

She waited a long time, in the hope of hearing him descend, and return to his position down-stairs, but the silence remained undisturbed

ed, and finally her head drooped where she was sitting and she became unconscious.

When she opened her eyes again, it was broad daylight, and the sounds below stairs indicated that preparations were making for starting on their journey to join the wagon-train. She could hear the sound of voices, and she saw Mr. Jones, the insurance agent, returning from a visit to the spring.

Arranging her toilet, as best she could, with the limited facilities at her command, she hastily descended to the lower floor, where she found Glass-Eye had the morning meal waiting. In the rude fire-place at one side, a fire was smoldering and over this he had broiled a juicy antelope-steak that must have been procured the day previous. This was spread upon real plates, and knives and forks were ready upon the stand to be used in the participation thereof.

The hunter greeted her pleasantly, and directed her to the spring, which he supposed she wished to visit before partaking breakfast. As she passed out the door, she met Mr. Jones coming in, and Glass-Eye introduced them. Rosa paused long enough to be courteous, and then passed on, the agent making no attempt to explain his business, as he had no wish of exciting the ire of his host, who had forbidden him to do so, until he received permission from him.

In a few minutes, Rosa returned, and the three sat down to their morning meal, laughing and chatting in the most pleasant manner, and all on the best of terms with each other. A half-hour later, the three were mounted, and the eventful journey was begun.

The hunter had decided that it would be more prudent to make for Fort Union, where the wagon-train would be sure to halt, and where they could be certain of intercepting it.

CHAPTER

THE SIGNAL-FIRES.

"I TELL you what, gal, we've got a ticklish job afore us. Thar's a pack of them varmints that hev been follerin' us for the last six hours, and they're cute enough to know the p'int we're aimin' arter, and that's jest the p'int they've swore we shan't get without makin' a fight fur it. It's goin' to be some time afore we reach Fort Union, and it ain't goin' to be any child's play neither."

"Who are they?"

"Who are they?" repeated the hunter, in amazement that such a question should be asked. "Who could they be but Indians, and the wust pack of the wust tribe this side of Big Water—reg'lar Northern Sioux that hev drifted down yer on purpose to raise a rumpus with us."

"How many are there?"

"Nigh onto twenty of 'em—all mounted on the best of ponies."

"But I see nothing of them."

"I'll soon show you more nor you want to see."

Glass-Eye and Rosa had ridden some twenty miles from the ranch, a leisurely gait, and now at noon, they had halted at the base of a slight swell in the prairie, where the words just given passed between them.

The insurance agent had separated from them, before they had passed half this distance, promising to join them at Fort Union, although neither had requested him to do so. He had laid out a different route from them, and was quite sanguine of accomplishing considerable in the way of business.

Glass-Eye had been reserved and taciturn on the journey, and what few words he said related to the danger which threatened both. His manner showed that he considered this danger of the gravest character, and once or twice, he seemed on the point of turning back. As it was, instead of pursuing a direct line to the fort which was their destination, he deviated first in one direction and then in another, until the route became of such a circuitous nature, that it was certain they would have to spend several days on the road.

The face of the country underwent a material change, the prairie losing that monotonous, rolling character, and becoming broken with woodland, and crossed with numerous streams of water, some of which were so deep that they were obliged to swim their animals over. At such times, Glass-Eye took Rosa in his arms, and by great care, managed to get her across without so much as wetting her feet.

They were now within several miles of the largest river, the bed of which was so low and flat that it could not be seen until they were close to it. The shores were lined with a species of tall

weed or grass, extending several rods back from the shore, and it was among these that the hunter believed the Indians were waiting.

"You see, if they git us thar," he added, as they dismounted from their horses, "they will have us foul. If they make a dead run for us, they can't catch us, but thar they kin keep hid till we're right among 'em, and then raise on us. We'll stop here, fur, if we go clean to the top, they may catch a glimpse of us, and find out what we've sp'icioned."

They halted before reaching the top of the swell, in such a position that they could look over the plain extending beyond, without exposing more of themselves than their heads.

"Now tell me what you see," whispered Glass-Eye.

Rosa looked as sharply as she could, for several minutes, and then answered:

"There seems to be a level stretch of plain for over a mile where the grass becomes taller, and of a dingy-brown color."

"And right thar is the stream of water, and among that tall grass, I sp'ect the varmints are waitin' and watchin'. You see, we're follerin' the trail that leads to the fort. It ain't marked very plain, but the varmints know it as well as I do. I started on another route, which I thought would clear 'em, but it didn't, and I had to come back to this, and I'm afeard I hasn't done any better. Now, take another peep."

As he spoke, he drew from his pocket a small telescope, which he slid out to its full length, and handed it to her.

"I understand," she said, with a smile, as she took it, "why they call you Glass-Eye, when you use such means to increase your strength of vision."

Pointing the instrument in the direction of the river, the girl stood for several minutes, gazing intently, as if she meant the slightest object should not escape her. She was surprised at the power of the small telescope, which showed the tall, waving grass with startling distinctness. It seemed, indeed, as if she stood within a few rods of the river; but, look and examine as much as she chose, she could discover nothing unusual, and she so declared, as she passed it back to her protector.

He said never a word, as he settled himself for a long and searching scrutiny; but he held it only a few minutes, when he shoved it together again, with a spiteful clamp.

"They're thar! The whole pack are scroochin' down in the grass, expectin' we'll walk right into their jaws; but they're powerful mistook."

"What are we going to do?" inquired Rosa.

"Why, we've got to change our course ag'in, and if it keeps on this way, it'll be a month afore we catch sight of the flag that's allers a-wavin' above the fort."

"Is there no way of reaching it without crossing the river?"

"We might, by goin' 'round, but that would take us five hundred miles out of the way, and that'll hardly pay. We may as well mount and be off ag'in."

In the hour of peril, Glass-Eye was cool and prompt. He seemed to comprehend the situation at a glance, and was wonderfully fertile in his resources. Satisfied that the Sioux were hiding in the grass ahead, it was very natural that he should decline to cross the river at another point.

The case would have been very simple had nothing more than this remained to do; but the fact was, that in order to reach Fort Union, he had ventured to cross a most dangerous belt of territory, and found, as he had dreaded, that the Indian war-parties were everywhere.

Assisting Rosa into the saddle, with the grace and courtesy of a cavalier, he made another abrupt turn to the left, and they struck their steeds into a sharp gallop—both of the animals being well able to keep up such a swinging gait for hours at a stretch.

In order to reach the river at the point contemplated, it became necessary to make a circuit of several miles, passing a large grove of timber, which, as a matter of course, they kept on their right, in the hope of interposing it between them and the Sioux. The trouble was, that before reaching this, they were compelled to enter upon rising ground, where the Sioux would be certain to descry them.

"Why not remain on this side of the stream and out of the way of the Indians until night-fall?" asked Rosa, after her champion had explained the difficulties before them.

"We kin do that when we can't do anything else, but the varmints are doin' thar purtiest to gobble us up. Do you observe that hill layin' way off yender to the north'ard?" he asked, pointing to an elevation on the other side of the

stream, so far removed that it had a dim, hazy appearance.

As the girl turned her head in that direction, the hunter added:

"Now, if you'll twist your head square around, and look back, you'll see another, so much like that, that you kin very well take 'em fur twins. Wal, now, if you should take a squint at them through my 'glass-eye,' you would see a faint switch of smoke curlin' up from the tip of each."

"And what is the meaning of that?" inquired Rosa.

"Cuss 'em," growled the horseman, in the gruffest kind of a voice, "they're Injun signal fires, and what makes me so rippin' mad is that I can't tell what they mean. Last winter, when I was on a scout among the Apaches and Comanches, I got the hang of thar tricks, and I brought a party of United States cavalry right through the heart of thar country, 'cause I war able to read thar signals, and I knew just what to do; but these Sioux hev a way of thar own that I don't understand, and can't get the hang of, and that's why I feel like rippin' out. You see," continued Glass-Eye, glancing from one hill to the other, "they're on both sides of the river, and we're between 'em, and that's some on 'em got thar eyes on us all the time."

"How, then, do you propose to do?" asked his companion, not a little disheartened at the picture he had drawn of the situation.

"It's just come down to this: if we kin strike the river a mile or so ahead of them, we'll git time 'nough to swim our hosses over, and make start 'nough to let 'em whistle fur us; but, if they swoop down on us when we're in the middle of the stream, why, to draw it mild, we'll be in a tight fix—that's all."

CHAPTER VIII.

SIOUX CUNNING.

WHEN Glass-Eye reached the rising ground to which we have alluded, he called his pocket-telescope into requisition again, but to his chagrin was unable to discover the least traces of them. Whether they were still among the high grass, which was now so far removed that even the telescope failed to reveal them, was a question which could only be settled by conjecture.

The hunter was inclined to think the Sioux had detected the change of route, and had been prompt to offset it by moving further upstream, or by signaling to their friends on the opposite side, and, in either case, the attempt to cross the stream under such circumstances, would be dangerous in the highest degree.

As Glass-Eye expressed it, he was beginning to feel "wolfish" at this continued baffling of every attempt he made to circumvent the Sioux, and he expressed the wish, more than once, of mixing in a hand-to-hand row with a half-dozen of their leaders, that he might have the privilege of "unburdening" his feelings toward them.

"I'm afraid we're stuck," he said; "them Sioux know who I am, and they'd give a half-dozen of thar best warriors fur the sake of gittin' my top-knot. They know I've got a gal with me, and can't move round as I'd like to do; but wait till they run ag'in' me, and I'll show them a thing or two."

When they were opposite the piece of woodland of which we have spoken, Glass-Eye suddenly halted and proposed that she should wait where she was, while he rode forward and reconnoitered the river, with the purpose of finding out where his enemies were, and, if it were possible, to learn their plan of action.

At first, this was rather a startling suggestion, but when it came to be understood, there was nothing alarming or even imprudent about it. She was mounted, it will be remembered, upon one of the fleetest and most intelligent of horses, which was now in fine condition.

Her position would be such, that she could detect the approach of danger from any direction, and, in case any attempt was made to capture her, she had only to give Saladin free rein, and leave all her pursuers behind.

Untrammeled by her presence, Glass-Eye could move with a freedom that would permit to learn and do far more than he could in her company, and so he had scarcely made the proposal, when Rosa acquiesced, and, giving her a few words of warning, he galloped away in the direction of the river.

Left alone, the girl's first and natural course was to take a survey of the surroundings, and to make certain that she was prepared for whatever might come. She watched the hunter, as his horse dashed away, his body rising and sinking regularly with the motion of his animal, until he swerved enough to one side to inter-

pose the woods, so as to shut him out from view.

Looking back over the ground just traversed, she saw a stretch of prairie, upon which the grass was so stunted and short, that a poodle-dog could not approach without being seen. A half-mile ahead was the river, with its tall reeds and bushes—nothing was to be feared from that point, while the hunter was there.

On the left, the prairie was so broken and irregular, that she could not feel such a degree of safety as was desired. It seemed to her that an Indian might, unobserved, steal up close enough to deliver a shot, while the woods on the right were open to the same objection; but, as she could not increase her distance from either, without bringing herself that much closer to the other equally dangerous cover, she wisely concluded to remain where she was, without turning to the right or left, but ready to dart away upon the instant appearance of danger.

The afternoon was half gone, and they had not partaken of a mouthful since morning, nor had their horses made any halt, except to take a few swallows of water; but animals used in the West are accustomed to this sort of thing, and it seemed scarcely to affect them. In a certain sense the prairie traveler also speedily acquired an indifference to hunger and thirst, and he often surpasses his animal in undergoing privation.

Glass-Eye had intimated that he would return in the course of an hour, but, when double that time had passed, and nothing was seen or heard of him, she became conscious of a growing uneasiness, which made her situation of the most trying nature, tempting her more than once to ride beyond the woods, in hope of gaining some knowledge denied to her in her present situation.

Rosa was still in this uncertain condition of mind, when she detected an appearance in the woods on her right, which was perplexing to the last degree. That some one was there was certain, but whether a friend or an enemy was more than she could decide. The trees not only stood close together, but there was such an abundance of undergrowth that a foe could not have desired a better lurking-place.

A disturbance among these bushes proved that some person was moving about, and was close to the margin of the wood. The action was such that no wild animal could be the cause, and she was unable to tell what the object of such a maneuver could be—consisting mainly of an agitation of the shrubbery, without revealing him who was the cause of it.

"I wonder whether it can be Glass-Eye," she whispered, as both Saladin and herself looked intently in that direction. "He may have chosen this means of making himself known, but I can not understand what is to be gained by it. Time is precious and night is not far away, and if he does not appear very soon, I shall begin to believe that something has befallen him."

This misgiving was intensified by the sound of a gun in the distance, immediately followed by a second discharge—both sounding dull and faint, as if they came from the opposite side of the river; and our heroine had about made up her mind to advance and begin a reconnaissance in her own way, when her attention was again drawn to the wood upon her right.

At the precise point, where she had noted the perplexing exhibition, an arm now presented itself, holding a hat or cap, which was gently waved to and fro, precisely as any person would have done, who wished to convey a caution signal to some friend.

"It looks like the cap he wore," she added, more bewildered than ever; "it must be Glass-Eye, too, but what does he mean? He is so near that he could make me hear him, without calling in a loud voice, or if afraid to do that, he might, at least, show himself."

Rosa could believe that circumstances might arise, which would make it imprudent for the hunter to call her name, but, if he dared show his hat, and a portion of his body, there was no reason why he shouldn't reveal enough to establish his identity, and it was this incomprehensible action, which prevented her from riding nearer and calling to him.

Saladin seemed to be equally interested, and standing with head erect, ears pricked, and a somewhat more rapid breathing, he and his mistress formed a picture which would have delighted the heart of a painter or sculptor.

This aimless fiddling continued for ten or fifteen minutes, when the stranger did reveal himself. He first gave out a faint whoop, that was not calculated to soothe one's nerves, and then

stepped forward into full view, showing as he did so, a Sioux Indian in full paint and war-dress.

This was enough, and Rosa concluded the time had come for her to leave, but at this moment her pony gave a slight start, a shadow glided from the rear round to the front, and the next instant, she saw that another red-skin had seized the bridle of her horse and she was a prisoner!

Like a flash, the whole thing came to her. Detecting her position and watchfulness, these cunning Sioux had formed an ingenious plan for her capture. Knowing that it would be impossible to steal up unobserved, one of them adopted this means of holding her attention riveted, while another crept forward and played the part of captor.

The scheme worked beautifully—so that the sagacious Saladin did not discover the danger until it was too late. He did his best to break away from the red-skin, for he appeared to comprehend the blunder which he had committed, but the wily dog had been to too much trouble to allow his prize to slip from his grasp in this manner, and he held fast with a gripe of iron.

Poor Rosa almost swooned with terror, as she looked down in the horrid face before her, and saw the devilish, exultant expression which shone in the black, fateful eyes. She gazed around in a pleading, helpless way, as if wondering despairingly why Glass-Eye did not come. Then the terrible belief came that he had fallen, and the cap of his had been removed and used as a means to decoy her to her destruction.

She spoke to Saladin, and tried to urge him to break away from the Indian, but the latter raised his knife in a threatening manner, and she was forced to quiet the animal through fear of her own life.

Still holding the bridle in his rigid grasp, the Sioux started toward the wood, where his companion awaited him, and the black stallion had no choice but to step briskly after him, carrying his lovely mistress with him.

CHAPTER IX.

ANOTHER MYSTERIOUS SHOT AND A TERRIBLE RIDE.

WHAT a mistake that Rosa Beckwith had not accepted the revolver, which Glass-Eye had offered to place in her hands that morning before starting for Fort Union! She had not believed that an emergency was likely to arise calling for its use, and her natural timidity regarding deadly weapons made her reluctant to carry them about her person.

But now, as she sat upon her faithful Saladin and looked down upon the head and back of the Sioux warrior, leading him toward the wood, where his companion impatiently awaited his coming, she saw how it could be made to save her honor or her life. In such a case, the Indian would have been at her mercy, and she could have lodged a half-dozen bullets in his skull, and then turned and sped away beyond all danger.

It was useless to lament, and she could look around and pray that Glass-Eye might hurry and come to her rescue before it was too late. She knew he was equal in might or prowess to two of their best warriors to say the least, and that was all that she believed were within striking distance.

But alas! even this miserable consolation was denied her, for while they were still fifty yards from the timber, she detected a greater disturbance within it, and two others stepped forward and joined the one who had managed the stratagem with such skill.

At this juncture, the pony suddenly checked himself, standing so firmly, that the exasperated Indian holding him by the bridle, turned furiously about for the purpose of striking him.

He had drawn his long hunting-knife, and doubtless intended to kill the beast that had already irritated him so much; but he had scarcely drawn it back, when he threw up his arms with a yell, and pitched forward on his face, dead!

In that brief, terrible instant, the whole scene was pictured so visibly upon the mind of the imperiled girl, that she could never forget it to the latest period of her life. She saw the track of the bullet in his forehead, and knew that he was dead before he struck the earth, the wound showing her, too, that the ball had come from the open plain over which she had ridden with Glass-Eye, and which, it will be remembered, did not contain enough cover to hide a small dog, within a radius of several miles.

As before there was not heard the sound of a rifle, nor was any one visible who could have

fired the fatal shot—the same mystery attending it as on the day preceding.

But it was no time now to speculate upon such a question. Her golden opportunity had come with the shot, and heading the stallion toward the river, she called out:

"Away, Saladin, it's life or death now with us!"

The stallion understood what was required of him, and sped across the plain like an arrow, carrying his mistress as close as was prudent to the broken country on the left, and as far from the shots that the Sioux were sending after them.

These shots, however, were aimed more at the horse than at the rider, for, above all they wished to capture this beautiful white girl, whom fate had so well-nigh placed in their hands. It was not often such an opportunity was presented, and without a desperate fight being necessary, and they were not likely to give up the struggle, so long as there was the slightest chance of success.

A wild Indian in these later days, is never seen without his horse, and although, when Rosa first caught sight of these three, they were standing, yet all were upon their ponies in a twinkling, and dashing away at full speed after the flying fugitive.

All now depended on the girl taking the right direction; for, if she undertook to cross the river with those red-skins so closely in pursuit, she could not escape running into their hands. So long as an open road lay before her, and none of her foes presented themselves in her immediate front, the matchless speed of Saladin would keep her safe from harm.

She leaped forward so as to shield her body, as much as possible from the flying bullets, but the shots were wild—fired mainly while the Sioux were making ready for pursuit, and none of them so much as scratched horse or rider. When the three red-skins were mounted, they ceased firing, apparently believing that they were quite sure of their prize, which consequently they had no desire to injure in any way.

Men leading such lives as these wild riders of the plains, are accustomed to death in the most repulsive shape, and they scarcely glanced at the dead body of their fallen comrade, as they thundered by.

The prompt movement of Saladin had given him about a hundred yards the start, and he now not only maintained this lead, but slowly and surely drew away from his pursuers. The three Sioux branched out as much as possible, so as to head him off, whenever he attempted to change his direction, or possibly to double upon his own tracks.

As soon as Rosa settled in her saddle, and satisfied herself that her beast needed no further attention, she glanced ahead, still wondering where Glass-Eye could be, if he were indeed alive. She had already passed far beyond the woods, and the prairie widened out before her, stretching right and left to a vast extent, with the muddy river-bottom rapidly drawing nearer in her front.

Not a living creature was visible as she looked ahead, but when she glanced back there was no mistaking the three fierce red-skins, who were bearing down upon her at tremendous speed. The fact that they had already branched apart fifty feet suggested to Rosa the peril into which she was running.

Straight ahead meant capture, and she must turn to the right or left, or lose irrecoverably the great advantage, already gained by the promptness and speed of her matchless stallion.

This conviction had hardly flashed upon her, when the splash of mud and water thrilled her with the fearful knowledge that she was already in the wet river bed—a few plunges more were all that were needed to carry her forward to the river. A startled look ahead, and she saw the broad, muddy river sweeping along before her, the opposite side apparently a full half-mile distant.

Before she could draw the bridle-rein, Saladin turned himself—heading to the left and upstream—still keeping at the terrific run with which he had started, although the ground was heavy, and he sunk to his fetlocks at every bound, with the mud flying in every direction.

This was the issue for which the Sioux had no doubt prepared, and which seemed to make the effort of the stallion all in vain. This change compelled him to describe the two sides of a triangle, while the single Indian was given the shorter hypotenuse and much better ground in which to head him off.

Like all his people this painted imp let out a yell of exultation, as he took in his glowing chances of success, and once more Rosa felt as if

cruel fate had decreed that there was to be no escape from the dreaded beings who followed her with such persistency.

Where was the mysterious marksman? Would he interpose again at the critical moment? Here were three of the Sioux wretches all bearing down upon her, with the ferocity of so many tigers. Could the same agency that had interfered twice to save her, stretch forth its hand again, and snatch her from her impending doom? Had it the power to repeat that wonderful exploit to the confusion of a whole trio of human wolves?

These frantic inquiries flashed through the seething brain of the terrified girl, as she saw the monstrous disadvantage under which her steed labored, and felt that each pulse-beat was in reality lessening the distance between her and the foremost Indian.

But Saladin outdid himself, at this frightful trial. If he had been doing his best at first, he seemed now to be given supernatural strength, and with neck straightened out, and at the full bound, the earth seemed to fly beneath him. Heading straight up the river-bank, he bounded away like a meteor, the Indian forcing his animal to the utmost, and swinging his lasso round and round above his head, as an earnest of what he was about to do.

Up to this point, the chase was very much like the one of the preceding day; but it now took a decidedly different turn.

This Indian meant to lasso the horse instead of the rider, and he had the thong "ringed" upon his saddle and ready. A lightning-like whiz, and away the loop shot out in the air, like the loop of the hoop snake, and thrown with such marvelous accuracy that it could not fail to settle over the head and shoulders of the flying steed.

Provided the latter permitted it to do so, but like the trained mustang he knew what was coming, and as his bright eye caught the shadowy coil in the air, he gave his head a quick flit downward and to one side, and the loop slid fruitlessly along his streaming mane, over the fluttering dress of Rosa Beckwith, and to the ground, from which the Indian proceeded hastily to gather it up for the purpose of throwing it again.

CHAPTER X.

PERIL ON EVERY HAND.

EVERY second of respite was worth worlds to Rosa Beckwith, for at each plunge of the throbbing horses, they were placed more in a direct line of the pursuers and pursued, with the same surface for the hoofs of each.

Saladin gradually shied to the left, so as to bring himself upon the firmer ground, where his tremendous exertions could be made to tell with more effect, and he still remitted not the slightest effort.

The Sioux undiscouraged by the failure of his throw prepared as quickly as possible to repeat the effort. Knowing from the action of the stallion that he was too cunning to be caught by another attempt, he determined this time that the fair rider herself should be lassoed.

But Rosa expected as much, and she took lesson from her intelligent animal, knowing no reason why, if the trick answered in one case, it should not in the other. Leaving Saladin to himself, she kept an eye upon the movements of the Indian.

The latter had no time to spare, for his own steed could keep up this death-killing rate but a few lunges longer, and as soon as he could get the lasso in shape, he swung it aloft, and shot it forward, with the same venomous skill as before.

At this instant, the equestrian leaned over and clasped one arm around the neck of her loved friend, and, as she expected, the loop, striking upon her shoulder, slid over the back of the steed in the same vain manner as before.

It was too late now to gather and throw again. Ere the red-skin could do that, the gallant stallion was beyond reach of the longest lasso that was ever made from the hide of the buffalo.

Expecting that they would fire at her, when it became evident that her present capture was impossible, the fugitive kept her position, leaning forward upon her horse, with one arm enfolding his neck, and praying that whatever bullets were sent after her, might speed as harmlessly by, as did those of a short time before. At the same time, she closed her eyes and waited in the most painful suspense.

But not a single shot was fired, and gaining courage after a time, she stealthily raised her head. All three Indians were sitting motionless upon their horses, fully a quarter of a mile distant, seemingly watching her in her mad

flight. Speaking to her horse, he instantly slackened his speed, and she straightened up and looked more closely.

Yes; they had given over the pursuit, as if convinced that it was useless to continue longer, and they were willing that she should have the freedom for which she had so gallantly struggled.

But, brief as had been the experience of Rosa Beckwith in the West, it had been a terrible one, and had taught her that chivalry was a quality as foreign to the nature of an Indian, as generosity is to that of a miser, and this apparent yielding upon the part of the Sioux had nothing real about it. It was intended only to throw her off her guard, and to insure the success of some other scheme, to be tried at the earliest opportunity.

But how was this dearly-bought freedom to be used now that it was hers?

This was the question she asked herself, as she drew her steed down to a walk, and took a survey of her surroundings, so far as it was possible to do so. Night was close at hand, and still nothing was to be seen of Glass-Eye. Without him, it was useless for her to hope to rejoin her friends, or to find any assistance at all. She was like a shipwrecked mariner drifting in mid-ocean with no sail in sight, and little as she fancied Jefferson Jones, the insurance agent, she would now hail the sight of him as a perfect god-send.

On her right flowed the broad, silent river, with the tall weeds along shore, nodding and rustling in the twilight, and the sun already below the horizon. Dimly visible in the far distance, were the whitish blue outlines of a chain of mountains resembling an irregular bank of clouds against the horizon, and between them and the turbid stream, stretched the broken prairie.

She was approaching a portion of the country, wooded and hilly, and knowing how sorely her horse needed rest, resolved to penetrate to a safe distance in the solitude and give him time to recuperate his energies, which were likely to be sorely needed whenever the sun shone.

"The Indians can not follow our trail in the night-time," she said, giving expression to her thoughts, "and by the time the sun rises we will be under way again; but am I doomed to wander thus alone?" she asked, bitterly. "With the companionship of such an experienced hunter as Glass-Eye, I feel that we would have got through some way or other, sooner or later. If he has fallen, nothing but a miracle of good fortune can save me."

As soon as she reached the margin of the wooded section, she paused and looked back. She could see nothing of the Sioux horsemen, and turn in whatsoever direction she chose, the "coast" seemed clear.

She did not forget to look across the river, but the view in that direction was equally void of anything calculated to disturb her peace of mind.

"And now, I wonder if the wood is clear," she added, permitting her animal to move forward again upon a slow walk, "but, whether it is or not, Saladin, we must take the risk. There is no safety in such a country as this, and we must take the semblance for the real."

She speedily found that her horse had undertaken a difficult task, for the ground, in many places was so broken and jagged, that it required the greatest care for him to make his way without stumbling. Under such circumstances, it was more agreeable to walk than ride, and she took the lead, Saladin following her like an affectionate dog.

Rosa had gone but a short distance, when she noted that she was walking over a sort of trail, and which, she fancied, had been used quite recently.

"This will never do," she said in some alarm, "we are liable to meet some of these Indians at any moment. We must soon turn aside."

It was some time before she could find a place where this could be done with safety; but gradually the ground became more level, and she made an abrupt turn, which to her surprise and delight, speedily brought her to a small running stream, with an abundance of grass growing along the margin—the whole making the very spot which she would have selected as a camping-ground had she been given an entire day in which to search for it.

But what a position for a young lady! She was a-hungry, with no means of procuring food; surrounded by danger from wild animals and wilder men, without the slightest weapon with which to defend herself. No human friends were within call, and none knew where to look for her. Night closing in, and she in the

very center of the land of solitude and desolation—could the situation be more gloomy and despairing?

Poor Rosa Beckwith sat down upon the damp earth, and covering her face with her hands wept aloud. It seemed as if her heart would break, for her calamity was enough to crush the stoutest heart, and even in that dread moment, her anguish was as much for her father's sake as for her own. She was without a mother, and her only brother was in California hopefully awaiting her coming, with no thought of the terrible situation in which she was placed; but her parent must be in a torture of anxiety on her account—a torture to which the news of her death would be a relief.

As the tempest of her grief passed over, she became more calm, and looking up at the few stars that were twinkling through the branches overhead, she felt that Heaven would still protect her, and that in some way, though she could see it not, she would be brought out of the dark valley in which she was now groping.

Suddenly she was recalled to her situation by the action of her horse. He had been cropping the grass near her, and he now stopped abruptly, raised his head and seemed to be looking off in the direction over which they had just come. The gloom and shadow was too great for her to perceive anything far more than a few feet from where she was sitting, but the action of her friend convinced her that something unusual was going on, and that the danger from which she believed she was haply free for a time, was near at hand again.

Aladdin stood as motionless and silent as a statue, while the girl herself scarcely breathed in her suppressed excitement.

Sure enough scarcely five minutes had passed, when the stealthy tread of some person was heard only a few feet away. Rosa would have crept further into the recess of the wood, but she did not dare stir for fear of drawing attention to her hiding-place.

Little need of that. As if directed by fate, the figure continued cautiously to advance in a direct line toward her, until she could distinguish the outlines of a man, nigh enough to be touched with the hand.

"Well, there, Miss Beckwith, don't you think that the time has come for you to send in your application to the great Star Spangled Banner Life Insurance Company? We will give you the most favorable terms of any Company in the country."

CHAPTER XI.

OLD ACQUAINTANCES.

ROSA BECKWITH was so relieved at the discovery that it was indeed a friend instead of an enemy, that she sprung up and exclaimed, delightedly:

"Oh, I am so glad it is you."

"So am I. You do seem rather pleased, and if you feel like throwing your arms about my neck and hugging, why I won't object. Don't be bashful."

And Jefferson Jones acted very much as if they were accepted lovers, off on a little picnic of their own, where such a thing as danger or disturbance could not come.

"Where is Glass-Eye?" asked Rosa, disregarding the badinage of her companion.

"Haven't seen him since I left the ranch this morning. I'm quite hopeful that he has changed his mind, after a day's reflection and concluded to take out a policy in the Star Spangled Banner. How is it with yourself, my dear Rosa?"

"Leave that question until some other time," replied the girl. "Just now there are more important matters to look after."

"What can be more important than the question of life and death?" asked Mr. Jones, in a solemn voice. "Speak not so slightly of such a grave subject."

"But tell me, Mr. Jones—"

"Tut, tut," interrupted the insurance man, touching her shoulder with his finger, "don't address me in that distant, formal manner. Dear friends should not do so. Call me Jeff."

"Well, Jeff, how came you to discover me?"

"Saw you go by my lodging-place."

"What do you mean?" she asked in astonishment.

"I drove in here a couple of hours ago, picked out my camping-place, tethered my horse, reclined upon the earth in an easy attitude, and began studying the latest circular issued by the S. S. B., until it got so late that I couldn't see any longer, and then as I was getting ready to start my camp-fire, who should ride by but you? I was a little surprised, but concluded that you had changed your mind, and determined to take

the policy I hinted about this morning. I knew that Glass-Eye was quite prejudiced in the matter, and I thought it likely that you had quarreled, and you had left him and come back to hunt me out, and give me your application. Was I mistaken in my supposition, my dear Rosa?"

"Slightly," she replied, seeing that it was necessary to humor the fellow. "Not a word has passed between Glass-Eye and me upon the subject of life insurance, nor have I had a single thought regarding it, since I left you this morning. And, Jeff, if you will agree to say nothing about it, except to answer my questions, I will promise you to take the matter into serious consideration as soon as we reach Fort Union."

"I will make the bargain," replied the wide-awake agent "provided you don't take advantage of it, and fail to answer me any questions at all."

This, as may be supposed, was the very "point" Rosa was aiming at; but, as there was no way of circumventing the man, she was obliged to accede to his terms, and the matter was dropped for the immediate present.

As no preparations for camping had been made by the girl, she accepted the invitation of Jones, and accompanied him to where he had selected his own site. She caught the twinkle of his camp-fire, and was considerably surprised to find the comfortable manner in which he had things arranged.

His supper was cooked and resting upon some green leaves, ready to be eaten. He had fashioned a cup from the same material, his blanket was spread upon a bed of green boughs, the whole making the most inviting couch that hunter or traveler could wish. It was evident that he was a man not only of unabashed perseverance, but of great natural ingenuity.

Stirring up the fire with his foot, he waved his hand in a lofty way toward the couch.

"Seat yourself there, dear Rosa, I shall give you the best of fare at my command."

She gratefully accepted his invitation and partook of the well-cooked meat, with the keenest of appetites, and a certain wondering respect for the individual who could play so successfully his role in such a country as this.

"Have you had no encounter with the Indians?" she asked, as she recalled the terrible trouble, which had followed her all day.

"Nothing worth speaking of," he answered, indifferently, as he put his teeth in the juicy steak. "I shot nine or ten, and then the others took off their hats, and opened a way for me to pass through. The rudest people respect true courage, and you ought to have heard 'em hurra. I've been thinking very seriously of opening a branch office among the noble red-men of the West. What do you think of the idea?"

"I prefer not to think about it just now. Do you believe you can reach Fort Union, without the aid of Glass-Eye?"

"I can reach any point that I start for," said the modest insurance agent. "I came out West on a wager, because they thought I didn't dare to do it, at the home office. One of these days, I think people will begin to learn what a talented young man I am."

"No one could doubt that, who is in your company for a short time," replied Rosa; "but tell me, Jeff, do you think we are safe here?"

"Haven't the least doubt," was the calm reply. "I have got the best horse in the world; never afraid to go anywhere in his company, and always lay down to sleep when the time comes, no matter where we are. If there come any Indians nosing around, he gives me notice, and all I have to do is to climb onto his back and mosey out of the wilderness."

"A good horse is life, and a poor one is death in these parts. It would have been all over with me a long time ago, but for my matchless steed. I have had a terrible chase within the last few hours, and it seems that with two such sagacious creatures near us, we ought indeed to feel some security against the approach of our enemies. The most that we have to fear is that this campfire will catch the eyes of some of them."

"Can't do that unless they're mighty close; for don't you see how we are walled in by shrubbery, rocks and undergrowth, on every hand? I thought of all that, when I was prospecting for a place to spend the night. I've been in the country long enough to know something about the ways of their people, and I never had a camping-place, in which I felt more secure than I do here. Ah, my dear Rosa, if the subject of life insurance had not been forbidden by your sweet lips, what a charming evening we could spend! How I would unfold its beauties to you. How you would hang enthralled upon my lips, and how, in a very brief space, you would be

willing to pawn the very shoes from your feet for the sake of procuring a policy in the Star-Spangled! Ah! my dear one, you know not how much I endure for the sake of her who exacted that cruel promise of me."

"And you cannot appreciate the height and depth of the relief of escaping the din about that same matter. I suppose it has become a second nature to you, and you are really a monomaniac upon the subject of life insurance—"

Rosa suddenly paused in her chaffing, for both her horse and the one belonging to Jones gave out a whinny of alarm, which said as plainly as words themselves could have done, that trouble was at hand.

He leaped to his feet and started off in the gloom, the very picture of terror. This strange, contradictory being seemed now to be filled with a timidity tenfold greater than that of the defenseless female with him, and for the moment he was petrified, not knowing which way to turn to escape the danger that had so suddenly appeared.

"Thunderation! I guess it means Indians," he exclaimed, in a whisper, and then, without another word, he turned and "scooted" off in the darkness, like a chicken that sees the hawk swooping down upon her.

Left alone, with the danger impending, Rosa was at a loss to decide what to do. She was loth to follow the one who had so cowardly deserted her, and thinking it as likely that he had gone wrong as right, she started in an opposite direction.

But she had not taken a dozen steps, when, with a gasp of terror, she leaped back again as she found herself face to face with the very Sioux Indian who had made the attempt to lasso her a few hours before, and she was still staring in mute dismay at him, when the other two came forward as silently as shadows, and took their stations near her.

The cunning wretches had laid their plans with the treacherous sagacity of their people, and the result was all they could wish.

With the skill of veteran scouts they had managed to trail the horse for a considerable distance into the wood, and then separating and reconnoitering in the gloom, with all their senses on the alert, had finally struck the camp-fire, and the prize was theirs after all.

CHAPTER XII.

A FRIEND IN NEED.

ROSA BECKWITH had become too much accustomed to just such peril as this to lose her presence of mind at the fearful change in her circumstances. The three Indians spread out about her, so that, if she attempted to escape in any direction, no matter which, they would be sure to cut her off.

Scarcely a minute passed, when from the depths of the wood came a sound, like the chirping of a bird. It was faint, and yet distinct, and instantly arrested the attention of the Sioux, who looked at each other, and then exchanged something in their low, guttural voices.

Rosa could not decide from what direction the bird-like sound came, but when one of the red-skins turned about and moved silently away in the gloom, she knew that it was the signal, which was the cause. The chirping continued several minutes after his departure, and then all became quiet again.

During this time the captive was standing as motionless as the trees near her, and the Indians were so occupied with what they had heard that they seemed to have forgotten her altogether. She was not long in noticing this, and, as they stood somewhat nearer each other than at first, she suddenly resolved on attempting to escape from their clutches.

The thought had scarcely entered her head, when one of the Indians, with a spasmodic gasp, flung up his arms and fell dead. The sound of the rifle was heard this time, and taking it as a sort of call to put forth an effort in her own behalf, she darted away like a flash, into the wood.

But quick as she was, the remaining Indian was at her side in an instant, and, exasperated at the fate that had befallen his comrade, he raised his tomahawk for the purpose of braining her, when a dark form leaped forward from the gloom, there was a lightning-like circle and flash of light, and the savage went down beside his comrade, slain so suddenly that he had not time even to make his usual outcry.

"Oh, Jeff! there is another one yet! Let us hasten away!"

"Who you calling Jeff?" growled some one, "and what do you mean by saying that's another varmint, when that ain't a live one within a mile of us?"

"Glass-Eye!" exclaimed the delighted girl, springing forward and clasping the hand of the hunter himself, "I thought you were dead!"

"So I did come nigher going under than I wanter ag'in till the last flunk comes."

"Oh, what a terrible time I've had," she said, as she still held his hand, and the two walked back toward the fire, "but I knew when you staid away so long that you were either killed or were prevented from joining me."

"Yas," he said, in that gruff way of his, "I made a fool of myself. When I got over by the river I see'd signs of trouble, and I kept scouting so long that afore I knew it I got on t'other side of a party, and I had to do some of the tallest kind of dodging to get around so as leave 'em behind me. Now and then we exchanged shots. I got into a few scrimmages that war rough to tell you 'bout. I knowed that if you staid whar I left ye, and 'beyed orders, you warn't likely to git into trouble, though I tried as hard as I knowed how to git back to yer."

"How were you able to trace me here?" asked Rosa.

"Wal, it war on ginal principles, as they say. When I got sight of the perarie whar I'd left yer, it war just beginnin' to git dark, and of course I didn't see nothin' of yer, so I went to thinkin' and axin' myself what you'd be most likely to do, and I concluded you wouldn't be likely to make your hoss swim the river, 'cause that ain't the kind of work that a gal of your sex likes, and I concluded you'd make fur cover, and so I started after you, and I hadn't gone fur afore I struck your trail—"

"How could you do that when it was so dark?" Glass-eye laughed as he answered:

"I've tracked an Apache for fifty miles at night, and foller'd him among the mountains what it was as dark as a prize nigger, and done it too when we hadn't nothin' to guide us but his trail. In course that had to be some sharp feeling done, and anybody lookin' at us then would have thought we war studyin' the deaf and dumb alphabet.

"As I observed, I war lookin' fur your trail, and when I reached a place whar I thought it war likely to be, I slid off my nag and went to playin' the planner on the ground around me. When I struck hoss's tracks I know'd they war yours, 'cause they war smaller than the hoofs of the Injin ponies would have made. When I got to the edge of the wood, other animals' tracks begun to mix with 'em in a way that made me sartin that was trouble of some kind. Wal, it ain't any use of tellin' yer the rest, 'cause you kin guess it. And now, gal, I ain't goin' to run such a risk ag'in. I may have to leave you now and then for a few minutes afore we reach Fort Union, but I don't intend to go fur enough to 'low another set of the varmints to git atween us."

Rosa had made several gentle attempts to withdraw her hand from that of the hunter, but each time, he increased the pressure, so as to hold it captive. She noticed a certain tremor about it that told her she had been rather imprudent in showing such exuberance of feeling upon first meeting him.

She observed, too, that his hand was not only tremulous, but was small, and shapely as a lady's, and the thought suddenly flashed into her mind that this hunter, so rude of speech and manner, would make one of the grandest of men, if he could be given a year or two of civilization. He was handsome beyond all question, and, as she stole a glance at the face, so nearly hidden by the immense silken beard, she felt certain that if that were removed, the contour and features would be found of the same prepossessing character.

There was something in this physical beauty, this rough courtesy, and strong manliness calculated to win the respect and love of woman; and Rosa Beckwith became conscious of a certain strange pleasurable feeling, as she managed at last to withdraw her hand, and step back a little beyond his reach.

"You have had yer hash!" said Glass-Eye, looking around, upon the signs of their feast that remained, "and I s'pose yer don't want to stay in this yer country longer nor you hev to. Is that so?"

"I am ready to travel night and day," replied the girl, "to get out of this terrible neighborhood. We have already been delayed so long, that I begrudge every minute of rest we take."

"What's become of that Star Spangled Banner fellow?" asked Glass-Eye, looking inquiringly around. "If he wants to travel with us, it's 'bout time he showed himself."

As if in answer to an incantation, Jefferson

Jones at this moment walked forth from the gloom of the woods, and as he did so, he glanced to the right and left, at the cold inanimate forms of the Sioux arrested in the very midst of their infamous career.

"It's lucky I didn't effect an insurance upon those chaps. The company would have thought rather strange of it, to hear of three deaths, right on the heels of the issuance of their policies; but there is an impressive lesson in all this, which I hope will not be lost upon those who witness it. We want no stronger reminder of the fact that in the midst of life we are in death, and I myself could not make a more powerful appeal in behalf of the liberal and enterprising Star Spangled Life Insurance Company."

"What made you scoot so fast, when these varmints come down on yer?" inquired Glass-Eye, scowling angrily at the young man.

"What was to be gained by my staying here?" asked Jones, in turn. "I'm under no contract to slay three red-men at a time. You see, Mr. Glass-Eye, I always look at such things from a common-sense stand-point. I considered that the interests of my dear Rosa were above all others—obscuring, for the moment, even those of the Star Spangled. I reasoned that there was no way in which I could benefit her—so I was polite enough to withdraw and make way for you. What more could I have done?"

This ingenious logic could not obscure the fact, that the conduct of the man had been of a cowardly character, and Glass-Eye gave him to understand that his logic was all thrown away, adding:

"We're going to make a new start fur Fort Union, and if you want to jine us, see that yer hoss is ready."

CHAPTER XIII. THE NIGHT JOURNEY.

MR. JEFFERSON JONES, insurance agent, had no wish to leave the company of Glass-Eye, now that another attempt was to be made to reach Fort Union, for he had learned that in pursuing his legitimate business in this section, he was compelled to carry altogether too many "risks" himself.

He concluded that hereafter, he would aim for those points where he was likely to find a number of men gathered together, and where, while urging his claims, he could not feel a very strong suspicion that some one was liable to steal up behind him and run away with his scalp.

Viewed in this light, Fort Union was the place of all others, which it would pay to visit, and accordingly, viewing the matter in a pure business light, his decision was a wise one.

Glass-Eye himself had partaken of nothing since morning, and, although some meat still remained from the meal that Jones had provided, he would not pause long enough to partake of it. The few hours' rest had given the two horses all the time needed to recuperate, and his own he declared was in prime condition, and capable of going twenty hours at a stretch.

While they were hurriedly preparing, Rosa mentioned for the first time the incident of her being saved by the mysterious marksman.

Glass-Eye paused abruptly, and turning toward the unsuspecting Jones caught him savagely by the throat.

"See yer, old Star Spangled, I b'lieve you know something 'bout that!"

"Me?" gasped the terrified agent. "I—I know no more about it than you know of the benefits of life insurance."

"Then you don't know nothin'," added the disgusted hunter, "and what's more, you never will; but I want you to understand," he continued, flashing up again, "that if you try any of yer tricks onto me, I'll serve yer just the same as one of them howlin' Sioux."

"I trust," said the agent, in a lofty tone of offended dignity, "that the Star Spangled Life Insurance Company is too mindful of its position to descend to tricks of any nature."

The preparations of the trio were too simple to require more than the briefest time to complete them, and in a few minutes all three, mounted upon their animals, were wending their way out of the wood on their night journey toward the distant frontier post, where they expected to find complete safety from these harassing foes.

Glass-Eye explained that it was his intention to make direct for the river, and, after reaching the opposite side, to strike directly for the Sioux trail, and to follow it, unremittingly, until they should catch sight of the flag waving above the stockades of Fort Union. He said, that during his reconnaissance that forenoon, he

had come upon a couple of canoes, moored among the reeds, one of which he intended to appropriate to their own use. He had fixed the locality in his own mind, so that he was sure of making his way immediately to it, where, in case the boats had not been withdrawn, they could be made of the greatest benefit.

It was easy enough for the hunter to cross almost any stream upon the back of his horse—but to do so always compelled a thorough wetting of his garments—a very trifling matter to one accustomed to his manner of life, and especially at this season of the year. But it is easy to understand how exceedingly disagreeable such a thing would be to Rosa, and so long as there was any possibility of her avoiding it, so long it was certain she would do so.

The streams heretofore crossed had contained so little water beyond the depths of their animals, that Glass-Eye had managed to save this affliction to his charge; but the river they were now approaching was of such breadth and depth, that it would not have been possible without the aid of some artificial float.

It was this knowledge, which had influenced the hunter, fully as much as the certainty that the Indians were so close at hand, in his hesitation and reconnoissance of the shore for such a length of time, before venturing to cross. In moving out of the wood, he took the lead as usual, Rosa following next, and the insurance agent bringing up the rear.

He warned them against talking, or making the slightest unnecessary noise, and added a due notice to Jefferson Jones that if he attempted to introduce the subject of life insurance, he would demolish him instanter, and Mr. Jones gave his promise to do all he could to hold in, until they should reach some point where the matter could be discussed without so many distracting accompaniments.

Just as they emerged from the broken wooded tract, the moon appeared above the chain of mountains in the distant horizon, and gave such light that they could detect objects for something less than a hundred yards around them. Clouds were constantly moving before the face of the moon, as it climbed higher and higher, and the light was thus rendered treacherous and uncertain.

On the edge of the prairie Glass-Eye reined up, and looked and listened. His vision was too circumscribed, as we have shown, to discover any thing that was not comparatively near him, and he could hear nothing calculated to cause any uneasiness. There was something very mournful and dismal in the sound of the breeze, as it rustled the branches behind them, and in the soft flow of the broad river in their front.

"The varmints are on the look-out, too," added Glass-Eye, in a whisper, while they paused thus for a few minutes; "they're on both sides of the stream, expectin', no doubt, that we'll try to cross somwhar, and ye must be more careful now nor ever to keep from makin' any noise that'll let 'em know whar we ar'. And that reminds me, gal, that I don't think you'll object to take charge of a revolver now, will ye?"

Rosa replied that, after the experience she had gone through, she saw the necessity of carrying such a deadly weapon with her. Accordingly, he passed over to her a small silver-mounted pistol, apparently intended to be concealed in a very small space.

"It's little," he said, "but it makes it the handier, and it'll shoot as fur and as straight as a bigger one. Thar ar' six chambers loaded, so you needn't take the trouble to carry any ammunition, fur it ain't likely you'll have a chance to use any more bullets. If old Star Spangled gets to talkin' on insurance, you'll find that one barrel will be 'nough to stop him."

Turning sharply to the left, the hunter now led the way in a direct line for the river, and a few hundred yards sufficed to bring them in full view of it.

The river looked deep and dangerous, as it flowed swiftly downward on its way to the distant Gulf. There was enough ripple and agitation of its surface, as it glimmered in the uncertain moonlight, to give it the appearance of some vast inland sea, fretted by the gathering storm, and it required strong nerves and a daring purpose for one to plunge his animal into the powerful current, and breast its might in an attempt to reach the other side.

The three reined up just beyond the line of tall grass, where the ground was hard and firm, and where they could be at full liberty to turn and speed in any direction that should become necessary, upon the sudden appearance of danger.

"Where are the canoes?" asked Jones, when

they had sat their horses a few minutes in silence.

"Off yender, to the left," replied Glass-Eye, pointing up-stream. "It won't do to ride straight up to 'em, 'cause you see some of the varmints may be waitin' that fur this very thing. I'll have to leave you ag'in fur a little while," he said, addressing Rosa; "but I promise yer, it shan't be anything like what it was to-day. Whether the skunks are hangin' round thar or not, don't make no difference—I shan't be gone long—that I'll promise yer."

"And what are we to do to amuse ourselves while you are gone?" inquired the insurance man.

"Set still and keep yer mouth shut," was the reply. "It may be purty hard fur you to do, but it'll be a blamed sight pleasanter fur the gal, than fur you to get started on the insurance question. Remember that it's very likely that some of these Sioux are hangin' round, and yer must watch that they don't creep up onto yer. You'll find that'll be 'nough to keep yer from gettin' asleep."

"And suppose danger does appear?"

"Put back again over the perarie, leavin' my hoss behind. If they catch him, thar won't be any that kin hold him, and we'll manage to find each other afore long, and then I'll hunt you up, and we'll try it ag'in."

And, without any more words, Glass-Eye silently dismounted, and began stealing through the tall weeds, hoping soon to return with the coveted canoe in his possession.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE RECONNOISSANCE.

Glass-Eye was now engaged in an enterprise, which called into play all the subtle skill and power of which he was master. It partook more of the nature of a mental than a physical test, and it was the kind in which he delighted more than in the measure of his prowess as a warrior.

He knew precisely where the two canoes lay motionless in the tall grass, and whether there were any Indians or not in the immediate vicinity was the question which he had set about to determine, without making his own presence known.

This task was tenfold more difficult than the approach to a hostile camp, whether in the wood or upon the open prairie; for, in either of these cases, he could force his body forward without noise. If in the forest, the sense of touch notified him, when the snapping twigs lay in his path, and it was easy enough to remove them or to turn aside, and, if on the open plain, the soft yielding grass was silence itself.

But here he was compelled to step through the water, and make way with his hands at every foot he advanced. There was no avoidance of it, and the hunter had "stripped for the fight" by leaving his rifle with his friend, and by carrying no weapon besides his knife and single revolver.

Fortunately the ground proved not so soft as seriously to impede his progress, and pausing only long enough to make certain of the proper course to pursue, he began working his way further out in the river.

The water slowly deepened, a fact for which he cared not a whit. Indeed he would have preferred to find the boats where the current was deeper, as, in case of peril, he would be more at liberty. He was a swimmer and diver of remarkable skill, and in the darkness and among the weeds, he would have dodged and played about his enemies like a loon on a mountain lake.

As he progressed further out in the stream, the flow of the river became more perceptible, and here and there it rippled over or around some root, or larger weed with a gurgling noise, which the hunter was glad to hear, as he considered that it helped obscure to a certain degree, his own approach to the dangerous point.

When Glass-Eye stood in the water up to his waist, he was convinced that it was time he saw the canoes, for here was the very spot where he had seen them moored a few hours before. He was able to identify the disturbance of the weeds where the little boats had moved along.

"I'm afraid the skunks have come back and took 'em away," was the thought of the exasperated hunter as he looked carefully about him. "It's just like them blasted varmints; I never knowed 'em to do an 'bliging thing yet, except when one of 'em come away from the gal to-night into the wood, when I made the signal to him, and he wouldn't have done that if he hadn't thought it war the private signal of Creeping Panther thar biggest chief."

At this moment, the moon which was now quite high in the heavens, and which had been

obscured by a bank of clouds, came out into full view and greatly increased the extent of the hunter's vision, who, as much from instinct as from reason, stooped softly down so that the water reached his neck, and his head might have been mistaken for a stump, or a matting of the upper portion of a bunch of the grass.

As he did so, he caught the faint outlines of the stern of a canoe on the margin of the open water. It was there in such a motionless shape, as to show that it was probably made fast to the weeds themselves. A slight rippling along its sides showed its puny resistance to the current. A second glance convinced him that no one was in it.

But where was the second boat? This was the question which instantly came to the lips of Glass-Eye, who, by no means, was satisfied with the appearance of things. Some one had certainly visited this place during the last few hours, and it looked as if a trap had been set for him to walk into, just as he had seen attempted many a time before. He stood for several minutes listening and peering around in the gloom as well as he could, and then he began stealing forward again, the depth of the water enabling him to do so without any noise, although it was all he could do to keep himself from being carried off his feet.

Stealing along in this manner, he was surprised a few minutes later to catch sight of the second canoe, perhaps a dozen feet above the other, and like that resting clear of the grass and weeds, while one end was fastened to them, so as to prevent its being carried away by the current.

All this was what he expected, but, at the same moment, he saw something which was not so expected nor so agreeable. In the very middle of the upper canoe, sat a Sioux Indian, with his back toward him, and as motionless as the boat itself.

This fellow had doubtless been placed there to watch and guard against the very stratagem that was now being attempted. It was morally certain that he held a loaded rifle in his grasp, and upon the slightest intimation of the approach of this daring foe, he would be as quick as a flash of lightning to lodge the bullet in his brain. It followed therefore that some of the red-skins had learned of the reconnoissance of our hero, and, as he himself suspected, had arranged this little game for his benefit.

Having learned this much, the next thing that Glass-Eye set himself to learn was whether there were any more of these red-skins in the immediate neighborhood. A few minutes sufficed to convince him there were none, unless they were crouching within the first canoe, which was now within arm's length.

But even this contingency was impossible, for the fragile boat rested like an egg-shell upon the water, which it was impossible for it to do, while it contained anything that weighed so much as fifty pounds.

The problem then narrowed itself down to the question, whether Glass-Eye had the power to withdraw the first boat from its frail fastening, without notifying the Indian who was a guard. It was easy enough to steal forward and quietly put him out of the way, as preliminary to taking possession of his property, but such a course was more distasteful to the hunter than perhaps the reader imagines.

In sooth, Glass-Eye was no human butcher, who took the life of an Indian foe, in mere wanton cruelty, as do too many marauders on the plains of the West. Although he knew he was held in deadly hatred by all the red-skins with whom he came in contact, yet he never raised his hand against them, unless he was literally compelled so to do.

In the present instance, he would much rather undergo the delay and risk attendant upon the pilfering of the boat, rather than go forward and cut the Gordian knot by one sweep of his hunting-knife. He believed he could do it, and he set about it at once.

Taking a step further, he suddenly found himself beyond his depth; but he managed to keep himself afloat, without the slightest disturbance of the water. A faint, flutter-like movement of the feet was all that was required, and he continued to approximate to the prize, until at last he laid his hand upon the gunwale.

It was imprudent to break its fastenings, or to start down-stream with it, until he made sure of the present *status* of the Sioux sentinel. The sky was still clear, so that every thing was favorable to his purpose, and he peered around the side of the canoe at the savage, the result of which was the discovery that the Indian was looking directly at his boat.

Could it be that his suspicions were aroused?

Had his keen ear detected something of a tell-tale nature in the rippling water? Such, at least seemed to be the case.

Glass-Eye watched him in his stealthy manner, and in the dim, misty gloom, he saw distinctly his broad, painted face, and the cat-like glitter of his eyes. It might have been all very natural and by the way, but when the staring was continued for full a minute, the hunter knew it meant something more.

At this critical juncture, the scout purposely made a slight disturbance in the water, and, as he anticipated, the Sioux instantly dipped his paddle in the water, forcing the canoe loose from its fastenings, and sped straight as an arrow for the very spot where the eyes and nose of the hunter were above water!

CHAPTER XV. STEALING A CANOE.

THE action of the Indian was exactly what Glass-Eye intended to make it. So long as he held a glimmering suspicion that all was not exactly as it should be, so long he was certain to be unusually vigilant in watching his charge, and the difficulty of taking it away from under his eye unobserved was increased tenfold.

But let him make a thorough examination, and become satisfied that all was right, and his vigilance was sure to relax to that extent which was indispensable. When, therefore, the canoe shot toward him, he quietly dropped beneath the surface, and shifted his position so as to come up a dozen feet away.

As he did so, he discovered the Indian paddling around the opposite side of the stationary boat, and a moment later, he returned to his former position, where he fastened it again to the weeds, and came to a rest as before. Thus far the "pot was boiling precisely as the cook wished it to boil."

The sentinel indulged in one scowling glare, as if in anger that the mute object should have disturbed his rest, and then he sullenly turned his head away.

"And there he'll keep it," concluded Glass-Eye, "unless I'm fool enough to make some blunder that will let him know what I'm doing."

Swimming stealthily to the stern of the boat, he found that a small cord was tied around a few bunches of grass, and this slender fastening was quickly severed with his knife. Then, in the same cautious manner, he grasped the gunwale, so as to hold it against starting away too suddenly.

Another glance at the Sioux, showed nothing but his head and shoulders, and Glass-Eye now began the wonderfully delicate task of extracting the canoe from its hiding-place, without arousing the Indian sentinel, within twenty feet, who had been placed there to guard against that very thing.

It is impossible to magnify the difficulty of this exploit, and the only way in which our readers can realize it, is to go West and personally attempt it. There is no doubt, but what they will "know how it is themselves."

Had the Sioux been gazing at the boat during the next ten minutes, it is not likely that he would have suspected what was going on. It was literally inch by inch, that it stole over the surface, until the figure of the red-skin grew dim and more indistinct, and finally making sure that he was in clear water, the scout turned down-stream, and his boat assumed a motion characteristic of a man who was in a hurry to get away with it.

Some fifty yards or so from the starting-point, Glass-Eye raised himself above the water, and by a skillful movement placed himself inside the boat, where he seized the paddle, and with one sweep, sent the vessel ahead, like some crouching animal that leaps upon its prey.

Instead of keeping close to the outer edge of the grass and weeds, he turned the bow of his birchen toy toward the middle of the stream, not pausing until he had reached a point where even with the aid of the moonlight, he was barely able to catch a glimpse of the waving grass and the shore beyond. Here he headed up-stream, his speed against the powerful current, seeming almost as great as in still water.

His knowledge told him when he was nearly opposite the point where the Sioux was stationed, when he came to a halt and held his boat stationary.

Just as he had expected. The Indian had discovered the absence of the other canoe and had started in search of it. Slight as was the noise made by his paddle, Glass-Eye heard it distinctly, and could follow the movements of the boat, by the faculty of hearing alone. Laying down his own paddle, he stretched out in the bottom, and bringing his pocket telescope to

the aid of his naturally strong vision, he permitted himself to drift with the current, while he watched the movements of the Sioux.

The latter kept close to the edge of the bushes, knowing that if the wanderer for which he was searching, had drifted away of its own accord, it was not likely that it had floated very far away in the stream.

With their relative positions nearly the same, the two went down the river for some distance, until Glass-Eye judged that they were nearly opposite the point where he had left his friends, when by a slight exertion of the paddle, he held his canoe motionless until his man was out of the way, when he shot his boat in among the weeds as far as it could be driven, and stepping out into the water, which was only a few inches deep, walked out upon dry land.

At first, nothing was to be seen, but the faintest possible whinnies from his own horse apprised him in which direction to turn, and a few minutes later he placed himself beside Rosa, who was scarcely more pleased to see him than was Jefferson Jones himself.

"It was all I could do to keep him quiet," she said, alluding to this gentleman. "He insisted that you had gotten into deep water, where you were drowned, declaring that he knew from your build that you did not know how to swim, and he ought to go to your assistance. A few minutes' longer absence, and you would have had him after you."

"It was all genuine philanthropy. If your life had been insured, the Star Spangled w'd have been desirous that you sh'd not have perished; but I, thinking only of yourself and your interests, was more anxious than ever to prevent such a catastrophe. I trust you are man enough to appreciate my motives."

"I rather reckon I am," growled Glass-Eye, "but next time when I'm off on a little private business of my own, you'll wait till you hear me yell for yer afore you come arter me. Wal, things look lovely, and we hain't no time to spare."

He explained briefly the plan he had decided upon. The canoe was large enough to hold all three, while the horses must be left to themselves. His own animal was so well trained that he only needed starting right to swim straight to the other side. Saladin's own intelligence would lead him to do the same.

"And how about *yours*?" he asked, turning to the insurance agent.

"We insure animals in the Star-Spangled Banner, but I haven't any policy on him."

"Hang it! that ain't what I'm talkin' bout," exclaimed Glass-Eye. "I wonder if you ever think of anything else besides that infernal insurance business? Wal, if he won't foller the others, you'll have to walk the rest of the way to Fort Union—that's all."

"You meant to ask whether mine would keep company with the others, eh? Well, why don't you say what you mean? If a horse has to be trained two or three years to make him do that sort of thing, I have my doubts, 'cause I've never trained mine to that sort of business; but a man who has been as long as I have in the insurance—"

"Thar! that'll do; let's be off—no time to talk."

The baggage of the party, such as was liable to be injured from coming in contact with the water, was removed from the animals preparatory to being placed in the canoe. The remainder was securely strapped to the back of their animals.

Then Glass-Eye took the bridle of his own Blunderbuss, and led him among the grass and weeds toward the river. Saladin, at a word from his mistress, followed, but Jones had to use some sharp urging before his animal would join them. Finally they moved off in Indian file, stepping carefully until they got beyond their depth, when each in turn began swimming, all aiming for the opposite bank, and going ahead with a steady, even progress, like brutes who appreciated the labor they were set to perform.

Glass-Eye stood among the weeds, watching the long heads of the horses lying upon the water, until they faded out in the darkness, when he returned to where his friends awaited him, and told them that the time had come to make the venture, upon the success of which so much depended.

With that same rude courtesy that had distinguished him from the beginning, the hunter picked Rosa up in his arms, hoping, as he did so, that his own garments were not wet enough to cause her any annoyance, and then walked out to where the canoe was awaiting them. Depositing her carefully in the boat, he turned

around, expecting to see the agent, but he was not visible.

"I do believe he expects I'm goin' to fetch him on my shoulder," laughed Glass-Eye. "It won't do to holler, so I'll hev to go back and tell him to walk out himself."

But reaching the mainland again, Mr. Jefferson Jones was still missing, and the hunter not only wondered, but began to feel a vague alarm at the shape things were taking.

CHAPTER XVI. ON THE RIVER.

GLASS-EYE was unwilling to wait long for the absent Jones, for time was of inestimable value, and a few minutes' delay at this critical juncture was very likely to be fatal to the entire party. Still he had no wish to leave the fellow to his fate, when there was a possibility of saving him—and he stood listening and watching, expecting and hoping that he would make his appearance until nearly a half-hour had passed, and not the slightest thing had been discovered to indicate what had become of the agent.

This would never do, for Rosa herself was endangered by the delay, beyond the mere tardiness in crossing the river, for unable to understand the cause for the prolonged absence of her friends, she might attempt to save herself, with what results could not be conjectured.

"I guess he's cotched sight of an Injin and has gone off to get him to take outa policy. I'll leave his hoss on t'other side, and he can come when he gits ready."

A few steps took the hunter to where he had left the canoe, and the girl, as may be understood, was found in a state of great trepidation and alarm. He explained in an undertone what it meant, and then carefully introduced himself into the canoe and took up the paddle.

"Hain't you heard nor seen nuthin'?" he asked, in the same cautious voice.

"I haven't *seen* any thing unusual," replied Rosa, "but several times I detected a rustling in the grass off there to the left, which frightened me a little, but I guess it was made by the current of the river."

"If it war," added Glass-Eye, "it'll be made ag'in, 'cause the tide from the Gulf don't come up quite so far as this. So jist listen a bit."

Both sat motionless and silent for several minutes, at the end of which time our heroine was compelled to declare that nothing had been heard of it.

"Still it may be all right," said Glass-Eye, as he took up the paddle again. "It might be some reptyle that was squirming amongst the grass, 'cause if it war an Injin he wouldn't have been likely to have hung off so long. Now, gal, I'm goin' to shove out, and I want yer to keep as mum as yer know how."

Rosa nodded her head to signify that she was ready to execute her part of the contract, and the hunter began pushing the little boat through the grass, doing it with a skill and silence that would have been impossible in one less experienced than he.

The absence of Jones led him to believe that the Sioux in some way or other had something to do with it, and made him all the more careful in these preliminary movements.

The sky, which, up to this time, had given no indications of an elemental disturbance, now showed serious signs of a coming trouble. A dark, heavy bank of clouds that during the earlier portion of the evening lay so low in the horizon, as to attract no attention, had been gradually stealing upward for the last hour or two, and its ragged edges already obscured the face of the moon.

There was something so peculiar in the approach of this turmoil, that Glass-Eye held his paddle motionless for a few seconds while he watched it. The heavy impenetrable wall of blackness that kept creeping up the sky, was like the insidious approach of night itself seeking to smother the moon in its murky robes.

A coolness of the atmosphere was also perceptible, as a steadily increasing breeze swept across the river and fanned their faces, and it was very evident that elemental commotion of some nature was upon them, and would be delayed but a very brief time.

This change was not without its advantages to the fugitives. Glass-Eye saw in the increasing darkness his opportunity for a greater freedom of movement, and a better chance for eluding the Sioux in case their hunt should become too hot for comfort.

By the time the outer margin of the grass was reached the moon was blotted from the heavens, and a pall of midnight darkness had settled over the river. Glass-Eye could scarcely distinguish the figure of Rosa, who cowered in

the other portion of the boat, with something of that terror which creeps over a dumb animal at the approach of the sun's eclipse.

"Don't be scared," he said, in a reassuring voice, "it's a good thing to get this inky weather about us, fur, don't you see we kin pass that much nearer the varmints without thar seein' us?"

There was some consolation in this fact, and she assured him that he need have no misgivings about her timidity.

"Go ahead and act as though I was not with you," she added, as he cautiously felt his way out into the river.

"Not exactly," he replied, as much to himself as her. "Ef I war alone, I wouldn't be dodgin' them red-skins quite so hard as this. I'd run a little more risk of a scrimmage with them. B'ars and catamounts, but it ar' dark!"

The gloom was now absolutely impenetrable, and the hunter would have headed directly across the stream, paddling without intermission until he reached the other side, if matters had not taken a rather alarming turn at this juncture.

Directly before them, and at the very point at which Glass-Eye was aiming, a signal-fire suddenly flashed out to view. It burned with a steady intense brightness, that sent its rays far out upon the murky river, and caused the hunter suddenly to check himself, while he studied its nature.

"Some of the blamed varmints are thar," he muttered, angrily. "They've found out we're on the river, and they're bound we shan't git off it. Let 'em hinder us if they can—"

"Look!" gasped the frightened Rosa, from her part of the boat, "they seem to be all about us."

That which caused this exclamation was the sudden appearance of a second fire, on the shore which they had just left, and so close, that the girl instinctively shrunk back fearful that she would be discovered.

As nearly as Glass-Eye could make out, it was upon the very spot where he had parted from the insurance agent, and, taken in connection with his disappearance, convinced him that some deep scheme of the Sioux was under way, the precise nature of which he did not understand.

The fire upon the far shore was much larger than the nearer one, and there was an evident communication between the two. The former burned with a steady glare, like that of Venus, while the one nearer to him showed some appearances altogether different.

The hunter was watching it intently in the expectation of discovering the passage of some body before the blaze, when a torch was suddenly lifted, and whirled around three times, with such rapidity that it resembled a wheel of fire more than any thing else.

This done, the torch was merged into the fire burning upon the ground, and Glass-Eye looked across the river at the distant glimmer to see whether there was to be any response from there.

It came next moment, and both he and Rosa distinctly saw the sweep of the torch until it had made a revolving circle four times—and then that too vanished in gloom. Once again the same thing was done at the fire near them, except that five revolutions were repeated, and then, for the present, the signaling ended.

This was Sioux telegraphy, and what was more, Glass-Eye was able to read it. Like the operator, who stands within hearing of the instrument and reads the message from the sense of sound, he was able to "capture" this as it went by.

"The varmints thar have notified the varmints over yonder that we've left the shore and ar' on the river atween 'em. Them four circles meant that they understand it, and would send out some of thar warriors to cut us off, instead of waitin' tell we landed. And then these dogs ag'in, make five circles, which says just as plain as if they had bawled it out in English that they'll do the same thing—so you see the fire we're put in, my gal—with 'em on both sides of us, and you see too how lucky it is the moon has gone out of sight—fur if we had that to fight ag'in, I can't understand how we'd manage to pull through."

"And now?"

"There's no tellin' what kin be done in a half dozen such hours as these. Ef I kin keep from runnin' into a fleet of 'em I don't think that'll be much trouble in reachin' f'other shore."

"But it looks as if they had our animals."

"Don't think they hev, 'cause Blunderbuss is a little too cute to be cotched handy—but sh!—fur a whisper may let 'em know whar we are."

CHAPTER XVII.

"AT SEA."

HUNTER and maiden were now adrift upon a "moonless sea," where all the consummate skill of the veteran was needed to pilot them through the breakers and to prevent utter wreck. He was like the captive who undertakes to run the gauntlet blindfolded. There was no conjecturing when or where he would come out, if indeed he was to succeed in coming out at all.

Stealthily the paddle was dipped into the swiftly-flowing current, and the cunning hand of Glass-Eye impelled them forward without the least ripple or noise. Could human vision have penetrated the starless gloom, it would have seen the canoe creeping on over the fretted waters, like the head of some monster of the deep that had come to the surface, and was noiselessly stealing up to the twinkling campfire in quest of its prey.

Rosa remembered the warning and made no attempt to speak, even in the lowest whisper. She could see the dim outlines of the hunter, as he sat bolt-upright in the boat, speeding it forward with that silent skill that had marked every movement since he came out from among the tall grass. She could detect the movements of his arms, as he shifted the long ashen blade from one side to the other, but it was like pantomime, or the flickering shadows on the wall.

Glass-Eye was puzzled to decide what point he should aim at, for the Sioux, understanding what a prairie genius they were seeking to outwit, would be certain to employ their most subtle powers against him. It did not seem natural that he would paddle directly toward the signal fire, and because it did not seem natural, might be the very reason for the red-skins' concluding that the scout would do the same thing. The same objection obtained whether he rowed down or up-stream, and it was these perplexing conclusions which led him to drive the birchen structure forward at a moderate speed, without aiming at any particular point, and content to make the other shore whenever it could be done with safety.

He called into action his utmost power of vision, and was only fairly out upon the broad river when he faintly discerned the outlines of a large canoe, containing a number of Indians. It was directly ahead, its course at exact right-angles with his own. The stealth and quiet with which they were proceeding, not the least sound having reached the ears of the hunter, proved they were up to the same tricks with himself.

It was an even chance whether the two would be seen or not. With the same power that he had called into play during the last half-hour, Glass-Eye held his little boat motionless, while the phantom-like figure crossed her bow, and the next instant vanished in the gloom.

Still our hero failed to resume the progress which had been made with such extreme caution up to this point. It was not because he was afraid of attracting attention from the canoe which had just disappeared, but because he was well satisfied that others were dangerously close, and there was as much safety in drifting with the current as there was in breasting it.

Rosa did not understand the cause of this delay, but she neither stirred nor spoke, and she was wondering why he let so much precious time pass, when her strained ear caught just the faintest warbling whistle—so faint, indeed, that she knew not whether it came from the air above her, or from the shore, or the river; but Glass-Eye recognized the direction, and it confirmed his worst fears. There were Sioux behind him, in front, and indeed on every hand; and, for the first time since starting from the shore, he became certain that it was impossible to reach the other bank in their present form.

There were more red-skins afloat than he had suspected, and turn in whatsoever direction he might, he was sure to run into them.

A desperate effort was necessary, and he leaned forward, so as to bring his face close to that of the frightened girl.

"Rosa," he whispered, speaking her name for the first time since their meeting, and in such a tender intonation, whisper though it was, that it stirred her heart; "Rosa, I shall have to leave you again."

"You are wise," she replied. "If we cannot both escape, it is prudent that you should see to your own safety. Go at once, and if you should ever meet my father, tell him my last thoughts were of him, and I thank you for all that you have so nobly done for me."

Glass-Eye started, as if stung by a serpent, and he spoke in sorrowful anger:

"Do you think I am base enough for that? Do you believe that anything in this world

could lead me to desert you for my own safety? I would rather that you had fired every chamber of your revolver into my breast than to have said that."

"Forgive me, Glass-eye, if I misunderstood you, but reason would dictate—"

"Never mind, now," he added in something of a more hopeful and cheerful tone. "I hope to settle that account with you at some other time. I have made up my mind, that there is no getting the canoe safe to the other side to night, when we are both in it. I'm going to lay the paddle in the boat, and swim behind it, with my hands against the stern. If the way is clear, I'll get you to the other side in time, though it won't be at locomotive speed. If the varmints do come up and take the boat, they won't git me, and if they take charge of you, don't make any fuss, but remember I'm hanging round, somewhere not fur off, and I'll never leave till I git you out of thar clutches. Keep up a good heart. The varmints are a little thicker on the river than I've been used to seeing 'em, but I've no doubt we'll pull through arter all. There ain't a gal that walks the earth that I'd do as much fur, as I would fur you, Rosa."

Again she felt the strange thrill, which had stirred her very soul, more than once, since they had been together. Something seemed to tell her that the hunter held feelings toward her, which were different from those of ordinary friendship, and a dim, delightful suspicion came over her that her own heart was drawn toward him, in these hours of fearful peril that they as I had spent together."

For the moment she forgot that they were walled in on every hand by the most implacable of enemies, and she saw only the strong, manly form of the hunter, who was so ready to lay down his life for her sake. A halo of glory and beauty surrounded the bronzed face, such as no other could wear, and she could have listened to his sweet, delightful words, the night through, had he been given the chance to utter.

But it was his very love for the girl, that made it impossible to forget the demands her safety made upon him. While he was talking, he had fastened his rifle to his back. It was of a make, by which he could immerse it in water, for any length of time, without damage to the charge within.

Above all things, he wished perfect freedom with his arms and limbs, and having secured it, he was now ready to play the part of water-spirit.

"I can see better with my head down near the surface," said he, "and it may be that you'll git a chance to do something by hiding yourself. If I want you to lower your head, so that no one can see you, without looking over the gunwale, I'll shake the boat and you'll understand what I want you to do."

Rosa replied that she comprehended his wishes, and would be quick to obey them whenever he chose to make them known.

"I don't know but what that insurance agent was the wisest after all, in taking another course. If he had staid with us, he would have been gone sure before this, for he couldn't kept his mouth closed for such a long time. Well, good-by."

As he spoke, he let himself over the stern of the canoe, going down in the water, as silently as if he were his own paddle, which he had thrust in so often.

Rosa listened, but she heard nothing of him, and she concluded that he had left the boat to drift with the current, until she became aware that there was a gentle change in its direction, and the soft rippling of the stream against its sides, showed that it was still under the control of the same powerful arm that had guided it so far on its way.

"Can he make his way through this labyrinth of danger?" she asked herself, peering into the surrounding gloom, and expecting at each glance to catch sight of the dreaded canoes stealing toward her.

CHAPTER XVIII. PLOTTING AND COUNTER-PLOTTING.

HAD the darkness continued of that dense nature which had marked the first obscuration of the moon, it is barely possible that Glass-Eye might have worked the canoe through to the other bank, but the elements that had been so favorable thus far now turned against them.

Despite the mass of inky clouds which filled the sky, and the cool wind that ruffled the waves, there was not the faintest rumble of thunder, nor flash of lightning, nor drop of water descending from them. It was one of those peculiar freaks of the elements which seem indi-

genous to the great West, and was indicative of no serious disturbance at all.

There came a lifting now of this dense pall—a partial dissolving of the murky blackness that veiled the moon—permitting a portion of its silver light to steal through and illumine the river below, so that Rosa found her field of vision considerably increased.

She found that she could see fully fifty feet in every direction, and she had scarcely made the discovery when it was followed by another one, alarming enough. Toward the shore which they had so recently left, was distinctly visible the figure of a large canoe, with fully half a dozen Indians—its position and appearance such as to prove that it was the one which had passed so near them, and which was now returning on its search.

It was so plainly seen, that there was scarcely a possibility that its inmates could fail to detect the smaller one so close by, and this thought had scarcely entered her head, when she felt a jarring of the boat, as if it had struck something in the river.

This was a reminder from Glass-Eye that she must conceal herself, and she instantly leaned forward, resting upon her side, so that every portion of her body was below the gunwale of the canoe, and in this attitude she awaited the ending of this terrible state of suspense.

In this position, with all her nerves at the highest pitch, she could feel the slight but regular pulsation of the propeller, as he shoved the boat forward through the water. He was swimming in that cautious, silent manner, which made it seem as if some tiny screw were stealthily working the vessel toward its destination.

But the Sioux would not have been Indians had they failed to discover the prize for which they were searching, when they were so close to it, and Rosa heard a guttural exclamation, which she was well satisfied in her mind, accompanied the detection of the boat, and then her suspense and anxiety were intensified until the issue should become apparent.

It seemed to the girl as if discovery itself would be a relief to this continued and terrible tension of the nerves, and if fate had determined that she should not escape, she desired to know it at once.

It must be known to these red-skins, or at least suspected, that there was an empty canoe adrift on the river, and seeing no one in this, would they conclude that it was the unoccupied one?

It would seem that such could scarcely be the case, and yet Glass-Eye placed some hope upon it. He knew the Sioux were moving rapidly about the river, and would not stop at any thing less than that for which they were actually searching, and if convinced that nothing was here, would pass on.

But the hope was without foundation. When the Indians detected the canoe, they headed directly toward it, approaching at a cautious rate, for they held this wonderful hunter in wholesome dread, and there was no guessing what scheme he had under way for their discomfiture.

Many of their warriors had already bitten the dust, from his dread rifle or terrible right arm, and leaving one of their number to manage the single paddle, they held their weapons ready for instant use, as the distance between the two was gradually lessened and the crouching lion still resolutely kept himself out of sight.

As minute after minute slowly passed away, Rosa Beckwith began feeling a painful revival of hope, when all at once, there was another slight jarring of the boat, and looking up, she saw in the gloom, the horrid face of a Sioux Indian almost against her own.

"Ugh!" he exclaimed, with an exulting gurgle, "white flower—much find."

And then two others joined him, and the terrified girl raised herself to the sitting position, with her head almost among these red-skins, who as may be supposed were exultant enough at the success which had rewarded their perseverance—a success, however, that was only partial, for they had set their hearts upon securing *Wah-winga*, the Great Shot, who had slain so many of their warriors, and for whose extirpation they had come a long distance.

Some of them seemed to have a partial knowledge of English, and the first inquiry they made after discovering she was alone, was:

"Where is *Wah-winga*?"

"Who is he?" asked the trembling Rosa in turn.

"*Wah-winga*, the Great Shot—kill many brave Injins—he paddle off with white flower—where he?"

"He left the boat some time ago," was the truthful reply. "You can not find him."

So it seemed indeed, but, if they had known how near that same individual was to them that minute, perhaps they would have differed in opinion; but, as it looked as if he was beyond their reach, they gave over further thought of him, and bestowed their attention upon the prize in hand.

One of the Sioux stepped lightly into the canoe, and as the other started for land, he followed, keeping a short distance in the rear.

There was one feature about this proceeding which struck Glass-Eye as a redeeming one. That was that instead of taking the boat back to the shore they had just left, they aimed toward the one which he had been striving so long to reach.

Few persons could have seen anything specially promising in this, but in Glass-Eye's estimation it lay in the fact that Rosa would be upon "the right side" of the river, which in reality was the great chasm that up to this time had been really impassable. Between this stream and Fort Union, there was nothing of a similar nature that could possibly occasion them any trouble, and so, if they could once secure a fair start, he had no doubt of their safe arrival at the post.

The hunter's words and actions showed that he had no doubt of his ability to recapture her, as indeed he had already done, and his maneuvering, in fact, forced the Sioux to do a part of the actual carrying of the lady toward her destination.

This knowledge prevented the position of our heroine from being one of utter despair, although the companionship of these savages was sufficient to horrify any one. The one who had taken charge of her boat, swung the paddle with an easy movement, that proved his training in the delicate art of managing the frail vessel, but Rosa noticed that as they proceeded across the river, they gradually fell behind the large boat whose occupants were making no effort to take the lead.

It seemed to escape the eye of the single red-skin, until the other was just vanishing in the gloom, when he expressed his surprise by a guttural exclamation, and instantly applied himself with renewed effort to close the gap between them.

For a short time everything went well, and he was rapidly gaining, when in spite of his efforts, the boat began dragging again—and a jarring resistance was perceptible which satisfied the red-skin that something was wrong.

Still he persevered in his work until his comrades vanished entirely from view, when he laid down his paddle and sat perfectly motionless for a minute or two, which he devoted to a careful study of the "disease" of the canoe. The result was the conviction that there was something in the water, which was playing the mischief, and he stealthily leaned over the stern, knife in hand to correct the trouble, the nature of which he fully suspected.

CHAPTER XIX. ON THE OTHER SIDE.

JUST as the Sioux leaned over the edge of the canoe, he caught sight of the well-known head of Glass-Eye, who seemed to make no effort to escape his scrutiny.

"Ugh!" exclaimed the red-skin, as he raised his weapon aloft, comprehending on the instant the cause of his trouble in locomotion.

The next moment, the knife was raised aloft, and, as it descended, with a spiteful force, the appalled Rosa gave utterance to a faint scream of terror.

But the alarm was unnecessary; for despite the disadvantage of positions, the herculean hunter grasped the wrist of his enemy, like a vise, and with a prodigious effort, drew him headlong into the river.

The Sioux went down with a loud splash, and for a minute or two, the girl was paralyzed with the evidence of the fierce struggle going on so near her.

But it was brief as it was terrific, and while she sat, certain of the worst, the canoe gave a frightful lurch, and the dripping form of the brave borderer came over the gunwale, and the next instant, the paddle was in his hand.

"Now we have another chance," said he, in a low, cautious voice, and without the least apparent excitement, at the awful conflict from which he had emerged; "keep quiet and we may come out all right yet."

As he spoke he dipped the paddle in the water, turning the bow completely about, and drove it swiftly toward the shore, the outlines of which were fairly discernible through the

darkness of the night. The tall heavy grass seemed to offer an impenetrable wall to their further progress, but it was this same shelter which he coveted now more than anything else, and he made toward it with a speed which seemed dangerous under the circumstances.

The other canoe, containing the Sioux, was but a short distance away, and they were paddling with a carelessness that enabled Glass-Eye to locate them, without the least difficulty, and consequently gave him all the guide he needed to keep clear of coming in collision with them.

His eagle eye was turned in every direction, penetrating the darkness, on the watch for the insidious approach of his enemies, and Rosa scarcely dared draw a breath of relief until the soft rustling of the grass against the bow of the boat, indicated that they were forcing their way through it.

Not a sign of an Indian had yet been seen, and both the occupants felt a stronger hope than ever, that they were to succeed in pulling through the vast difficulties which had hedged them in so closely and so long.

As the grass grew denser, and the water more shallow, Glass-Eye ceased paddling, and used the blade as a pole, shoving the boat forward, with as much stealth and caution, as if certain that the rushes were alive with his enemies.

In this way, it required but a few minutes for him to approach within a rod of the hard, firm earth, where he ceased his labors and came to a dead standstill.

All was silent, and nothing of a threatening character could be seen or heard.

"What will they think and do, when they find nothing of the other canoe?" Rosa ventured to ask, leaning forward, so that her head was close to that of her protector.

"Don't know," was the answer. "It'll bother their brains a considerable, I reckon, to understand what tricks he has been up to."

"They will miss us pretty soon, will they not?"

"Yes, and will begin to make a hunt for us—so you see we're not out of the woods yet."

"Had we not better land, and make off while we can?"

"There's the trouble," he said, with some perplexity of manner. "We're a full quarter of a mile below where our horses landed, and them varmints are above us. We've got to get by 'em to reach our animals."

"Can we not make a circuit out upon the prairie, so as to pass around them?" inquired Rosa, who feared that this delay was hazardous.

"I've been thinking of that, but I opine, I kin git one of the horses at least, and fetch him down hyar, better than we kin go to him."

"Why do you not land then and do it while I wait here for you?"

"That seems to be the best thing that can be done, and yet I almost swore I'd never leave you to the chance of getting coched in another such a scrape. The varmints may come down on yer while I'm gone, and then thar'll be the hardest kind of work to do; but, mind, if such a thing does happen, that you mustn't git down in the mouth, fur I'll fetch you out of your trouble, ef I hev to foller you all the way to the Red River of the North."

"I do not doubt you in the least," returned Rosa, with considerable feeling; "you have already risked your life over and over again for my sake, and no matter what the result may be, I shall be as grateful as ever."

"I wish I could do ten times as much," repeated Glass-Eye, more to himself than to his companion. "It is a strange chance that has thrown you in my way, and I can see the workings of Providence through it all. I pray that He may not forsake us now in the crisis of our peril."

The heart of Rosa was thrilled by these words, which sounded to her like the earnest, impassioned pleadings of some lover kneeling at her feet. She could make no reply, for she knew not what to say, and there seemed indeed no reply required.

For a moment or so there was silence between the two, the emotions of Glass-Eye being such that, for the instant, he forgot the peril by which he was surrounded, and for the first time in his life, he was recalled to his duty by the words of his companion.

"Will it be safer for me to wait here than upon land?"

"I guess we'll try the shore," said the hunter; "they'll go hunting for the canoe, and will be likely to find it pretty soon, too—but they won't know where to look for you—that is before daylight comes."

Glass-Eye cautiously raised himself to his full height in the boat, so that his head towered

above the grass, and he looked in every direction. Right and left was the rustling grass, and back of him flowed the broad, rapid river, dimly visible in the pale light of the moon, and without an object discernible upon its surface.

Directly in front was the prairie, stretching away to a distance almost illimitable in the gloom and darkness. The signal-fire which had caught the eye of the hunter, and apprised him of the mischief afoot, was extinguished, and it was night everywhere and in whatsoever direction he looked.

But the Sioux, those creatures of the night, were prowling everywhere, and no one could tell at what moment, nor precisely where they would spring from the earth.

"I see nothing of them," said Glass-Eye, as he crouched down again. "It isn't likely that we'll have a better chance. How I wish that ink-blanket would spread over the moon again—but it won't, so we'll make a strike."

Stepping carefully into the water, it was found to be only a few inches in depth; and having adjusted his weapon so as to leave his arms free, he raised the maiden as though she were but the merest child, and walked carefully through the grass until he stood upon *terra firma*.

"There," he whispered, as he set her down with some reluctance, "we're across the river at last. If I can't find the horses, I'll come back and take you to Fort Union, in my arms. It would be happiness to do so, and if I believed it possible, it should be done."

Having placed her upon her feet, he still kept her small hand imprisoned in his own, and they walked carefully forward upon the prairie, all their senses upon the alert, and fully aware of the peril in which they were placed.

Rosa saw no reason why they should not hurry forward in this manner and accomplish all the distance possible while darkness was at their command; but Glass-Eye knew it would never do. Daylight was already close at hand, and every foot in this direction only separated them that much from their indispensable horses.

No matter how far they might journey on foot, they could be easily trailed as soon as the sun should rise, and speedily overhauled by the Sioux sweeping over the plains mounted upon their swift steeds.

CHAPTER XX.

JEFFERSON JONES ON A SCOUT.

MR. JEFFERSON JONES, insurance agent, has already proven himself a gentleman who will not be put down, and it is but just that we should give him a few words of attention.

His separation from Glass-Eye and Rosa was without any premeditation on his part, and the consequences were as little foreseen as those of that eventful ride which Rosa took from her father's wagon-train, a few mornings before.

Jones saw from the manner of the hunter that he had no intention of carrying him out upon his shoulders, and knowing that the canoe in waiting had been found, he thought there was good reason to believe that he might discover one lying so close against shore that it might be entered dry-shod. In case he did, he meant to take charge of it and paddle across upon his own account, a proceeding which he was sure, would tend to increase the respect of the hunter for him.

So he rode off down the river-bank, keeping a "sharp eye to windward," while he waited as close to the grass as circumstances would allow. It is scarcely necessary to say that he failed to find that for which he was hunting, even though he went a long distance away from his starting-point.

The gloom was so great that he could scarcely see his hand before his face, and on this account, it may be, that his sense of hearing was all the more acute; for he had stood still scarcely a minute when he was certain he heard some one walking over the grass toward him, with a stealthy, cat-like movement, that was calculated to make the bravest man tremble.

What should he do? If he turned to run, he was afraid of betraying his position and inviting a rifle-shot; and if he stood still, he was sure the Indian would run against him, and then there would be the mischief to pay.

However, he concluded to stoop down and abide the result; but, when he became more satisfied than ever that the red-skin was about to tumble over him, he attempted to steal to one side in the grass, but, as luck would have it, it entangled his foot in some way, and he almost turned a somerset before he could stop himself.

Believing a row was inevitable, Jones held his gun in hand, ready to discharge it at the instant he could locate his foe; but, with his

own mishap, everything became as silent as the tomb around him.

There was no doubt of the Indian being very close at hand, but the trouble was that the two might have touched each other without knowing it, in this gloom. The situation was such an exceedingly trying one to Jones that he concluded to back out at any cost, and he began a retrograde movement, which seemed to succeed, for soon the steps were heard no more.

Amid the stillness and gloom of the night, as he stood silent and listening, he heard three low, cautious signals, which, it will be remembered, caught the notice of Glass-Eye, while he was carefully guiding the canoe across the river. This seemed, to some extent, to make him uneasy, as he could not feel certain of what these calls and replies meant.

"They've found I'm off here somewhere," he concluded, "and they're gathering a force to attack me. They know it'll take a big number, and so they're going to besiege me on all sides, firing from the four quarters of the compass at the same time. Under such an arrangement, it's best for me to make a change of base."

This was easily enough done, the agent locating about a hundred feet southward. He would have gone still further, but for the partial clearing of the sky, which he was afraid would draw too much attention to his movements, and he paused once more, with his feet ankle-deep in the water of the river.

Standing thus and looking in every direction in turn, he became aware that some object was extended along the ground, a few feet in front of him. He was only able to detect the barest outlines, and could not for the life of him make out what it was.

Moving forward a few steps, he finally saw that it was a canoe, resting in the shallow water.

"The very thing for which I've been looking so long," he delightedly exclaimed to himself.

"Now, I'll appropriate that, shoot across the river, get my horse, strike a bee-line for Fort Union, get in a couple of days ahead of Glass-Eye and my beloved, insure the whole garrison and wagon-train, and smilingly await the coming of the hunter, who I don't think will be able to hold out much longer."

By this time, he was within reach of the canoe, and, placing one hand upon the gunwale, stepped softly within.

As he did so, he placed his foot squarely upon the stomach of some one asleep in the bottom of the boat, who gave out a fearful grunt, and seized him with tremendous power.

"I surrender!" groaned Jones; "I surrender! Why don't you let go and run?"

CHAPTER XXI.

THE SECRETS OF THE SHOTS.

GLASS-EYE moved off across the prairie, with the cautious stealth of a wild-cat. He felt that it was a critical period for his companion. The river passed, the way was now open to Fort Union, and provided they could get possession of their horses, there was a fair prospect of their leaving this dangerous region in their rear.

He had proceeded some two hundred yards in this manner, when his trained ear detected the slightest possible sound, and he paused and listened. All seemed still, but suspecting what it meant, he stooped down and applied his ear to the ground. Yes; it was the faint thump of horse's hoofs upon the earth, and it needed only a minute's close attention to discover that they were moving down the river, and in a direction that led directly away from the hunter, who sprung instantly to his feet, and dashed through the darkness, like a man running from deadly peril.

It was a proof of the remarkable skill and knowledge of these men, that the hunter not only discovered the direction these horses were pursuing, but the precise distance they were off, and all through this single faculty of hearing. A rapid run speedily brought him in sight of three animals, walking away, conducted by a huge Indian, who sat upon the middle one, and was leading the horse of Rosa upon one side, and that of the insurance agent upon the other.

"Blast his picture!" muttered Glass-Eye, when he recognized the state of affairs. "Such impudence as that ought to be made an example of. The idea of he, a genuine red-skin, getting astraddle of my horse—it's too much—too much!"

His rifle was already at his shoulder, when he reflected that the crack of the weapon would be likely to mix things; for a large number of the red-skins were close at hand, under the impression that the fugitives were still upon the river, and their mistake would thus be made known to them.

But Glass-Eye had set out to rescue the horses, and he only substituted one scheme for another. Lowering his rifle, he ran softly forward, giving utterance to a low whistle, when a rod or two distant. Blunderbuss instantly halted and pricked up his ears, for he identified it on the moment as the call of his master.

The Indian noted it also, and his suspicious nature told him at once that some mischief was up, and he turned his head just in time to catch sight of a dark figure that bounded forward, landing like a ball upon the haunches of the steed. Glass-Eye had his knife in one hand, and made a clutch at the red-skin, but the latter was too quick for him, and was off the animal like a shot.

"Tis Wah-winga, the Great Shot!" exclaimed the Indian, speeding away like the wind and leaping from side to side, and contorting his body in all sorts of ways, so as to distract the aim of the terrible hunter, who, he expected would fire every minute.

But Glass-Eye did not consider the game worth the candle, and the very instant he caught the reins of Blunderbuss, he wheeled him about, and galloped back at full speed toward the point where Rosa was awaiting him, the other two animals following close at his heels. The wide-awake girl heard them approach, and advancing some distance over the prairie toward him called his name in a cautious voice:

"Here I am!" he replied, in his gruff way, as he caught the faint sound, and hurried in her direction. He had scarcely caught sight of her form, when her own mustang gave utterance to a joyful neigh of recognition, and dashed in ahead of him. Rosa scarcely needed the help of the hunter's outstretched hand, when she was in the saddle again, and they were ready for their ride to Fort Union.

They were still close to the river, and in accordance with his cautious nature, Glass-Eye reined his horse down to a dead stand-still, whispering to his charge to do the same, while both listened intently in the hope that their ears might gain some knowledge which was denied their sight.

In this respect, they were not disappointed. The sound of a paddle was heard, and then the soft swish of a canoe forcing its way through the tall grass, very near the spot where the two themselves had landed but a short time before.

"Let us hurry away," suggested Rosa, who as might be expected, was growing very uneasy at the tardiness of her friend. "They will discover us in a few minutes more."

"Be patient a few seconds," he returned; "that doesn't sound to me like the party that have landed there. Hark!"

At this instant, in the still night air, a well-known voice was heard:

"When I stepped over the canoe and sat down, I was in such a hurry that I didn't observe that you was taking a nap there, else I wouldn't have sat down on your stomach and woke you up. But I'll make it all right, by giving you preachers' rates in the Star Spangled Banner Insurance Company—"

"That blamed fool don't know what danger he's in," whispered Glass-Eye. "If he stays there five minutes more, he's a dead dog sure. Hold on a minute till I try to raise him."

Rosa was glad enough to hear that he contemplated this deed of mercy, and she prayed for his success, while the hunter drew his horse round to the right, and cautiously advanced until he could learn the position of the parties.

Glass-Eye had not exaggerated the danger of Jefferson Jones, who was really in more peril than he had been at any time since leaving the "home office," and coming out West. Upon entering the canoe, upon the other side of the river, where the sleeping Indian lay, it would be hard to say which was the most amazed. The red-skin, however, was the first to recover his self-command, and caught and disarmed the agent in a twinkling. Clutching him by the throat, he was on the very point of burying his knife to the hilt in his body, when another savage came forward out of the gloom, and the work was stayed a moment until they could consult together.

The result of this short conference was the conclusion that it was best to extract some knowledge from their prisoner, before putting him to death. And so, all three arranged themselves in the boat, and while one of the red-skins used the paddle, the other questioned him in broken English.

Jefferson Jones lied amazingly, and yet it is scarcely fair to speak of it in that fashion, inasmuch as he had no certain knowledge of the whereabouts of Glass-Eye and the lady. He did his utmost to befriend the two by locating

them where he was certain they could not be; and by the time the other shore was reached, he was quite sanguine that they were completely astray, as to where to look for the young lady, whom they were all so anxious to secure.

It was here that the captors by a species of telegraphy unknown to the one most concerned, had arranged that the white man was to be killed and scalped—a fate which they would have been only too glad to visit upon the greater and much more feared Glass-Eye.

Jones had just completed the observation which we have already reached, when he was horrified by the sudden discovery, that the two red-skins were on the point of taking his life. They had completely disarmed him, so that he was without the means of resistance, and the poor fellow knew how utterly useless it was to make any appeal to their magnanimity or mercy. One swarthy wretch stood upon his right hand and the other upon his left, each apparently waiting for some signal before doing their devilish work.

The agent had but one desperate recourse left and that was to cut and run, a recourse which, it would seem, could only defer his frightful fate, seeing that both were much more fleet of foot than he. But he did not hesitate; suddenly ducking his head, to avoid the blow that was ready to descend, he bounded away at full speed. As he did so, the red-skins leaped after him, both with upraised knives, and side by side. At that instant the thunder of horse's hoofs was heard, and the mighty mustang, upon which sat the infuriated Glass-Eye, with one tremendous plunge, crushed one of the wretches beneath his iron feet, and leaning forward, the hunter, with one terrific swoop of his right arm, smote the other to the earth, as if stricken by a bolt from heaven.

Jones, ignorant that he had been saved, was speeding away for life, when the plunging horse was almost upon him. Still he did not look up, nor stop, but tore ahead, with despair in his heart, and the momentary expectation of finding the hunting-knife buried between his shoulders.

But, instead of that, the hunter still speeding onward, leaned over the side of his horse, and catching the belt that girded the waist of the terrified fugitive, swung him clean off the ground, and by one mighty effort landed him sprawling and kicking upon his horse in front of him! And bidding the agent be still as death, Glass-Eye, pushed on, until he saw dimly looming through the gloom the figure of Rosa Beck with seated upon her horse with that of Mr. Jones near by. In a twinkling, as it were, all three were on their way, and they headed at once toward the distant fort, which had seemed to elude them for so long a time, like the *ignis fatuus*, which recedes at the traveler's approach. As there was reason to believe that there were Indians in their immediate neighborhood, they picked their way along with considerable care, until they were fully a quarter of a mile from the river, when the guide reined up, and indulged in a word or two of explanation, for the benefit of his companions.

"Now," said he, "it's a straight trail right up to the flag-staff at Fort Union, and we've got to do some hard riding to reach there in time. You know that daylight is close onto us, and just as soon as them critters can make out our trail, they'll be after us, like so many wolves after a wounded buffalo. They've got the best kind of horses, too, and they'll put 'em through like the very blazes."

So they sped on until a gradual lightening of the sky showed that day was breaking.

By this time they had passed over several ridges, and broken portions of the prairie, so that they were all of a half-dozen miles from the river, and entirely beyond sight of it. As the prairie was slowly revealed to gaze, Glass-Eye carefully scanned all that was visible, on the look-out for "sign," as the trappers term that significant warning of the presence of Indians, for which the hunters are ever searching and yet ever dreading to find.

"I don't see anything back of us that need make us skeery," he remarked, after making as full a reconnaissance as possible, "there ain't a blamed copper-skin in sight as fur as I kin disriver."

"But where is the trail that you said we were to follow?" asked Rosa, looking around. "I do not see it."

"You remember the light on the ridge made us take a roundabout way to it. It's 'bout a quarter of a mile beyant that timber, where we'll stop long 'nough to git something to eat and give the horses a bite."

The place to which he alluded, consisted of

two or three acres of sparsely wooded land, the spaces between the trees being filled with luxuriant undergrowth, while it stood in a valley so low as to suggest that it was the very place to find game, and a very ugly quarter in which to be discovered by some of the red-skins who were known to be searching for them. Glass-Eye was well aware of this, and he told them that their halt must necessarily be a brief one, for he seemed to consider it more than probable that trouble was close at hand.

A few minutes' brisk gallop brought them to the wood, where all three halted, and waited ready to advance or retreat while Glass-Eye made a rapid circuit of the grove to satisfy himself that it would be safe to enter. He shortly reappeared with word that everything was right, and they rode in beneath the shelter and dismounted.

To their surprise and disappointment, not a drop of water was found—a fact which puzzled the hunter himself, who said that it was a rule where such vegetation of such a character was seen, there was always sure to be a spring or brook near by; but the loss was not serious, and all could afford to wait.

"Keep quiet here," added Glass-Eye, "while I make a little search for fodder. I won't be gone long."

He was as good as his word, and was scarcely out of sight when the crack of his rifle was heard.

"That may mean danger," said Rosa, startled at the suddenness of firing. "He may have been attacked."

"I guess not," was the indifferent reply of Jones; "if the Indians were after him, he would have yelled for me to come and help him out of his trouble. Like enough he has shot a red-skin, and means to make a dinner from him. I shouldn't wonder now if fricassee Indian would go pretty well. Let's get ready for him."

Glass-Eye had told the agent to prepare a fire as speedily as possible, so that no time should be wasted, and he proceeded to gather a lot of sticks and ignite them, while Rosa passed to the margin of the grove to guard against any of their foes stealing down upon them, when they were unprepared.

Jones was not tardy in performing his appointed task, but by the time the fire was fairly under way, the hunter was upon the ground with the shoulder of a fine antelope in hand.

"Now we'll have a breakfast in the quickest style," he said; "we've got to cook and eat on the jump, for there ain't any time to fool away. Well, Miss Rosa, how many red-skins did you see?" he asked, as the girl came timidly back to the camp-fire. "Fifty, or a hundred, or five hundred?"

"None at present, and I feel as though I can never bear to look upon another again, I so loathe them all."

"They ain't the purtiest things in creation to look on, that's sartin. Well, here we are, and now pitch in."

In an incredibly short space of time, the sliced meat was broiled upon the live coals, and the savory morsels were grateful to all, who felt the need of nourishing and substantial nutriment.

Time was precious, and the rate at which the dinner was swallowed was enough to make all three dyspeptic under ordinary circumstances, but none were injured, as it was.

"Now you had better get into the saddles and be ready," added Glass-Eye, moving briskly about, "and while you are doing that, I will ride up the hill, and find out whether any of the varmints are close enough to make us trouble."

Not long after both were alarmed by the sound of guns, and looking up the girl exclaimed:

"Merciful heavens! Glass-Eye is killed and we are lost!"

Scarcely a hundred yards distant the hunter was engaged in a desperate hand-to-hand combat with fully a dozen mounted Indians. Having discharged his rifle, he had out his revolvers, one in each hand, and was blazing away at the painted imps who were closing in upon every hand. With a chivalry that would have done honor to Chevalier Bayard, he kept pressing up the ridge, where there was the greatest danger, his purpose being to draw the savages away from the wood, where he had left his friends, so the latter might be given the more opportunity to escape.

Foot by foot the daring Glass-Eye fought his way over the ridge, and when at last every chamber of his revolvers was emptied, he flung them in the faces of his assailants, and with a defiant yell swung his clubbed rifle round his

head, and smote right and left like an infuriate Hercules. The red-skins went down like tenpins, and a moment later the horse of Glass-Eye, with a desperate lunge, disappeared beyond the top of the hill with the whole party swarming after him.

Then it was that the girl aroused herself to her position, and looked affrightedly about her. To her great consternation, no one was near her. Looking about, Jefferson Jones was seen a quarter of a mile distant, having just reined up his horse while he was beckoning excitedly to her, and shouting in a voice so loud that she distinctly heard every word:

"Come, Rosa! quick or the Indians will have you! Come, flee with me. Never mind about Glass-Eye!"

Even in that fearful moment the heart of the maiden was filled with loathing at the shameless poltroonery of the man, and she held the rein of her mustang taut, loth to join one who had deserted the noble-hearted hunter when he stood in such need of help.

But she could not remain quiescent even when she so willed; for at this moment a couple of Indians appeared on the brow of the hill, as if they had risen from the ground, and with their horses at full speed dashed down in full pursuit of her.

The splendid stallion Saladin needed no urging from his mistress, but at one tremendous bound was off like an arrow in pursuit of the terrified Jones, who, seeing the Indians coming, put his animal on a dead run, determined that there should be no closer acquaintance between him and those whom he held in such dread.

Rosa felt little fear of her pursuers, for her steed was comparatively fresh and had already proven his mettle in more than one similar contest. She urged him not, and indeed paid no heed to his course at all; but, as he had headed toward the flying agent, she let him continue in that direction.

Five minutes showed conclusively that her horse was by far the fleetest of the party. He steadily and rapidly gained upon Jones, and as steadily and rapidly drew away from the red-skins who were urging their animals to the utmost.

The endangered agent kept glancing over his shoulder, and as the girl came abreast and forged ahead, he yelled like a Comanche to his mustang, and the creature bent every muscle to the contest; but in spite of all he could do, Rosa continued to draw ahead.

Saladin, with the sagacity which always distinguished him, continued edging off to the left, until he gradually slackened his speed, aware that he was entirely out of the fight, for the Indians, convinced that it was useless to pursue him, turned their whole attention toward the one that fate seemed to have marked for their own.

Slower and still more slowly went her noble mustang, until he came to a dead halt, and gazed upon the thrilling scene with scarcely less interest than his rider, whose gaze was riveted upon the impending tragedy.

The red-skins were gaining very surely and perceptibly. The terrified rider still urged his beast to the utmost, and he seemed to be thundering away with the speed of the arrow from the bow. The pursuers realizing that the game was their own, had ceased firing, and did nothing but follow at that tremendous gait, which the fleeing mustang strove so hard, but all in vain to equal.

One of the red-skins was a rod in advance of the other, and was increasing the lead, when, without any warning, he threw up his arms with a yell, and rolled headlong to the ground. No shot was heard, and he was evidently picked off in the same mysterious manner that so many of his race had fallen during the past day or two, not knowing from what point came the avenging rifle-ball.

The second savage seemed not at all affected by the awful fate of his comrade, but kept as persistently in the line of the pursuit, as if assured it were impossible that a similar Nemesis should overtake him.

It came nevertheless, when he was within striking distance of his prey. He had indeed raised his arm for the purpose of flinging the fatal encircling lasso, when his life went out, and his horse too galloped riderless over the prairie, Jones never looking back, but fleeing in the same mad manner as before.

By this time, Rosa Beckwith fancied she heard a faint report, as if made by a rifle in the distance, and turning her head, saw a horseman coming toward her with the speed of the wind. He was still so far away, however, that she could not identify him, but supposing him to

be another Indian hastening toward the spot, she was on the point of moving away, when some influence restrained her into waiting until she could make certain whether it was a friend or a foe.

A wild thrill of pleasure ran through her breast as she recognized Glass-Eye, the hunter, whom, up to this minute, she had believed to be dead.

"Thank Heaven! he is aved!" she exclaimed, to herself, as her beautiful face flushed; "what a noble, brave man, and how much he reminds me of another, who has long since been lost to me."

He came forward at the same terrific rate, until he reined up his mustang with a suddenness that threw him upon his haunches.

"Thank Heaven! I find you safe and unharmed," he said, in a low, passionate, loving voice. "I was fearful that our good fortune could not carry us through this new and fiery ordeal."

Rosa started. These were not the words she was accustomed to hear from him. She had noticed more than once before that he talked like anything but the rough, ignorant hunter he professed to be.

"Why do you look at me so strangely?" he asked.

"There is some mystery about you that I do not understand. At times your manner reminds me of a dear and valued friend I once had."

"Who was he?"

"I honor his memory too much to pronounce his name," she replied, with suppressed emotion.

"Was it Harry Delmar?"

"Good heavens! did you know him?"

"I am he!" replied Glass-Eye, "driven away from home, out upon the prairies, in this wilderness, by my hopeless love for you. Oh, dearest Rosa, is it still hopeless?"

Had he not caught the girl, she would have fallen swooning from her horse. For a few minutes she was unable to say anything, but after awhile it was all explained.

The story was a simple, but sad one. Harry Delmar was the accepted lover of Rosa Beckwith, and the marriage day had been appointed, when he, while absent, in a western city, received a letter signed by her, dismissing him forever. In the bitterness of his anger and despair, he crushed the missive beneath his heel, and bidding good-by to civilization and friends, became a wanderer over the prairies and mountains of the Far West. And not until to-day, did he learn that the letter which had caused all this trouble and sorrow, had been skillfully forged by a rejected suitor of Rosa's, who renewed his attentions, in the hope of success, but only to be repulsed as decidedly as before.

The poor girl was almost heart-broken at the disappearance of her lover, and supposed that he was really dead. They had not met or heard of each other for three years, until they encountered in the strange manner related at the beginning of our story.

As they rode along, in the blissful communion of love, Harry related the mystery of the shots to which frequent reference has been made. It was he who fired them all. In St. Louis, he procured a singular gun, with telescopic sights, and by means of another telescope, which he carried concealed about his person, he was able to exhibit a power of marksmanship that often bordered upon the miraculous. He chose to keep it a secret from all, until the present time, because it gave him a peculiar reputation that was often of incalculable use to him.

Some distance further, the half-crazed Jefferson Jones was encountered, having at last made the discovery that he had no more fleeing to do. He was made acquainted with the singular history of the two, who, in their happiness, promised him that, upon reaching Fort Union, both would permit him to take out a policy of insurance upon their lives!

They continued their journey until nightfall, when the wished-for haven was reached, and their troubles and dangers for the present were ended. Here Oscar Beckwith was found with his wagon-train, while he had a dozen scouts on the hunt for his daughter. The joy of the distracted parent, at the return of his beloved daughter, may be imagined in a degree, but it cannot be described.

Harry Delmar laid aside forever his character of Glass-Eye, and accompanying the party across the plains, settled in Oregon, with the darling bride of his heart, for whom he had suffered and risked so much, and the indefatigable insurance agent, Jefferson Jones, met with such abundant success in his new field of operations that he was soon enabled to retire on a comfortable competence.

THE END.

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